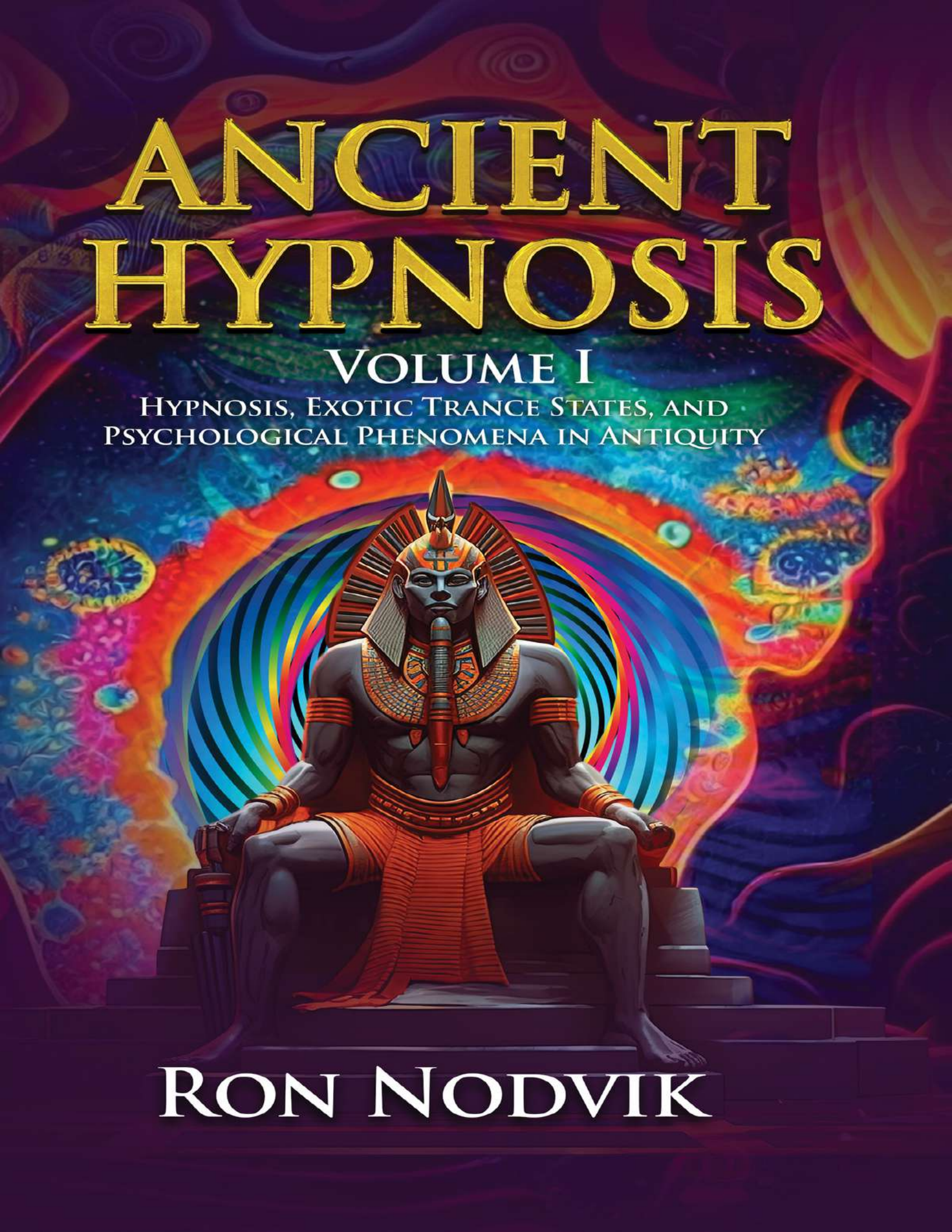
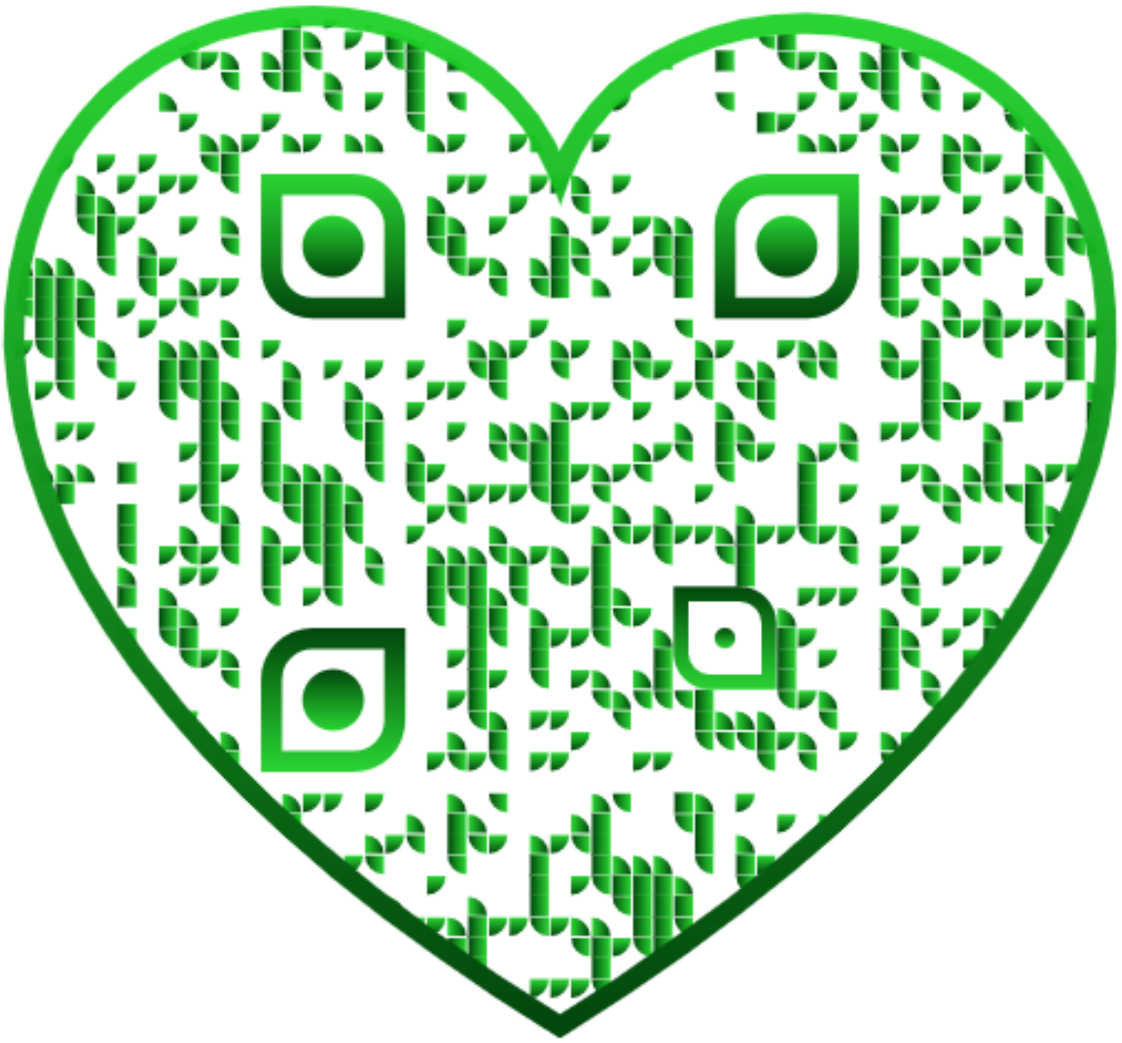
Ancient Hypnosis

Volume I

Hypnosis, Exotic Trance States, and Psychological Phenomena in Antiquity



Ron Nodvik



ANCIENT HYPNOSIS

VOLUME I

HYPNOSIS, EXOTIC TRANCE STATES, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA IN ANTIQUITY

Ron Nodvik

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Preface

The three volumes of *Ancient Hypnosis* (this book in front of you now being the first volume) are *the very first books ever written on the subject of ancient hypnosis.*

Not only that, but they're *the first time anywhere* where modern stage hypnotism and newly discovered "exotic trance states" are compared with the descriptions of trance phenomena found in ancient texts. Literally hundreds of books about hypnotism have been written over the last two centuries or more, but *not one has been published up to now on this particular topic*—the past use of hypnotism in ancient Western civilization. The reason for this is probably not due to any lack of interest in the subject

per se, but more likely to the difficulties of translating the forms hypnosis took in the ancient world into the concepts and terminology used for hypnosis today.

These books are not necessarily "academic" works, but they do assume that the reader already has at least a college-level knowledge of ancient history, philosophy, and religion, and a familiarity with things Greco-Roman and (to some extent) with ancient Egypt.

So, these books aren't for just anyone who might find themselves casually curious and interested in the subject, especially if they don't have any previous background in these areas. The reasons for this are simple: the nature of my intended target audience; and the fact that I do not have the time and space to educate readers beforehand on the basics of the subjects I will cover here, *other than what they need to know about hypnosis*.

Ancient Hypnosis is written primarily for scholars, professors, theologians, authors, students, and others already somewhat well-versed in ancient religion, philosophy, history, classics, Egyptology, or other related topics, for whom this information may be relevant to their field.

If you are a fellow hypnotist (or maybe even a psychologist) reading this, though these books were not really written for you, I hope you can enjoy reading them nonetheless (along with anyone else who can follow along).

A brush-up on your ancient history might be helpful, and there are lots of resources out there to help you with that.

Also, there's a reason why the scope of this book, as well as the following two volumes, is limited to ancient Egypt and the Greco-Roman and Biblical worlds. It's simply because this is what I feel qualified to write about when it comes to ancient hypnosis. I have no doubt that the Sumerians, Chinese, Indians, and other ancient civilizations cultivated the practice of hypnosis in some form or another, and maybe even institutionalized it within their cultures in their own ways—but those are all outside the scope of what I know, so I have left it at that. Maybe when someone does tackle the topic of ancient hypnosis for those and other ancient civilizations, this book may help lead the way to assist them in their endeavors.

As someone with a degree in Classical Civilization (with a minor in Old Testament theology) and post-graduate work in Egyptology who is also a certified hypnotherapist, a hypnotist trainer, and is knowledgeable about advanced hypnotic trance techniques, stage hypnotism, erotic hypnosis, and newly-discovered "exotic trance states," I would say that I have "a foot in both worlds," as it were. All this makes me uniquely qualified to write this book.

With this background, I hope to educate my intended audience (and any other interested readers) about the important role hypnosis played in ancient times and how examples may readily be found embedded in ancient texts, many of which may be already very familiar to them.

The major challenge for me in writing these volumes, however, was not finding and presenting the ways hypnotism was practiced in ancient times, *but how to sufficiently explain to my intended audience the facts about hypnosis they need to know in order to understand my books in the first place* (and as hypnosis is a rather obscure field in and of itself, I'm certain that almost all of them are completely ignorant of these facts going in).

How did I get here? Well, when I was nine or ten my dad, a physics professor at USC, took me to see Pat Collins "The Hip Hypnotist," who had her own nightclub in Hollywood at the time. I was simply astonished and amazed at what I saw then, and never forgot it. Years later, I found myself working as an analyst for the State of California in order to support my family (UCLA having lost their single Egyptology professor to AIDS without any replacement in sight), and playing guitar in a rather rebellious progressive hard-rock power trio on my off time.

But then I happened to see an advertisement for a lecture about hypnosis being held not far away in Carson, California. My interest in hypnosis had never waned since my dad took me to see that show when I was young, so I bought a ticket. I expected to just sit and listen to someone talk about hypnosis, but instead it happened to be Mark Cunningham who made us all get up and begin to practice hypnotizing each other. I found I was able to do so on my very first attempt, and I turned out to have a natural talent for it from the get go! Thank you, Mark! And the rest is history…

I especially credit my knowledge and experience with stage hypnotism as being crucial to the research that made writing this book and the following volumes possible. It requires a completely different skillset than the one used for practicing hypnotherapy, with which the majority of hypnotists are most familiar; it is, however, more similar to how ancient hypnotism (in the form of magic) must have been performed back then, which offers us many more possibilities for finding suitable analogs between ancient hypnotic practices and modern hypnotic techniques.

Enjoy!

Ron Nodvik

September 5, 2023

Introduction

“They seem to have led to some sort of hypnotic technique by which men could give both themselves and others the illusion of having experienced such an ascent.”

—Morton Smith, The Secret Gospel p.102

We all know trance when we see it (and even when it’s described to us). Eminent classicists and scholars of religion like Dr. Morton Smith, who is quoted above, are no exceptions. We’ve all experienced what we ourselves would recognize as some kind of trance, and we’ve all seen family and friends who were in trance at one time or another. *Trance is just what humans do* and have always done, from time to time and to varying degrees. Even so, we are most often unaware when it happens to us since we tend to end up feeling like we somehow weren’t there while it was happening (one of trance’s distinguishing features). Indeed, our language is rich with words and phrases that reflect this commonly shared experience: someone we know was “out of it,” “in la-la land,” or “spaced out,” etc. All of these denote a very familiar lack of conscious presence and awareness, often evident to anyone nearby.

Although most of the scholars quoted in this book have no training in hypnosis, they can all recognize trance when they see it, just like you and me. In the course of studying ancient texts, they were able to recognize instances of what seemed to them like trance and hypnotism. But unfortunately, that's as far as they could go with their intuitive speculations, *because they weren't hypnotists.* The only known exception to this was the classical scholar E. R. Dodds (somewhat of a hypnotist himself), who showed a thoughtful consideration toward hypnotic phenomena in his writings. But even he admitted to only having "dabbled" in hypnotism; and he was poorly prepared to recognize the kinds of stage hypnotist techniques, advanced hypnotic techniques, and instances of newly-discovered "exotic" trance states we will be covering here.

This book and the following two volumes are in part a response to the speculations of these scholars; and they will explore whether or not, and how much, their intuitions on this subject merit serious consideration. To do so requires looking at the evidence with the eyes of a hypnotist. So, this book, and the volumes that follow, are designed to allow you to see the subject with "new eyes" and to draw your own conclusions from the evidence offered.

Here is a brief overview of the topics you will find covered in each volume:

Volume I (this book) is primarily devoted to educating you, the reader, about the nature of trance and hypnosis so that you'll have everything you need to understand the material presented in this and the following two volumes. By the time you're done reading all this, chances are you'll know more about hypnosis than a lot of hypnotists do. It's only after you're brought up to speed on the subject of hypnosis that we'll begin to examine the kinds of hypnotism practiced in ancient Egypt and the Greco-Roman world. In this volume, the focus will be on the kind of hypnotism that most resembles the one-on-one type of sessions commonly practiced nowadays in clinical settings for therapeutic purposes—hypnotherapy. (In Volume II, the focus will turn to instances of ancient hypnosis that are more analogous to modern stage hypnotism shows).

In Volume I we will be looking at the temples of Asclepius, where the method used for healing was called "incubation." Then, after that, we'll examine what is known about a different kind of incubation practice—one that utilized the effects of sensory deprivation brought on by sustained periods of isolation in a cave or subterranean environment for mystical purposes. Another relevant ancient technique we'll be exploring is rhetoric, the art of persuasion which was considered essential to a proper education in the Greco-Roman world. We'll briefly look at what sophists and rhetoricians like Gorgias had to say, and see how aware they were of the hypnotic power of words useful for persuasion.

Then there were those ancient practices concerned with installing and transforming beliefs in the form of religious and initiatory rituals. We'll analyze some ancient initiatory texts that have come down to us and compare them to modern hypnotic induction scripts, to see whether and why such texts were used in a similar fashion. At the very end of this volume, you'll find three appendices regarding the ubiquitous role of music in trance induction. There you'll discover the role music plays in trance, and show you all the proof you need to understand how music is a form of hypnosis in and of itself. Having reviewed that, we'll look into how the ancient Greeks used music to control human moods and emotions, the myth of Orpheus (the Greco-Roman world's greatest musician), and present the reader with an interesting hypothesis about the most popular myth told

about him and the lesson it teaches about playing music "in the flow." In the process, you'll learn what the flow state is and how you can achieve and maintain it for yourself.

But, as the book's subtitle suggests, we will also pause here and there to look briefly at the kinds of psychological phenomena we encounter in our sources from antiquity ("antiquity" being roughly the period between 3000 BCE to 476 CE, the fall of Rome). Although of course these phenomena still go on today, we'll look at how they were interpreted in ancient times. Here in Volume I we'll be exploring two such phenomena—hearing voices and the ancient concept of having a personal "daemon" (the pagan version of a guardian angel). Other psychological phenomena of interest to the reader will be presented later in Volumes II and III as we go along.

Volume II shifts our attention to instances of hypnosis found in antiquity that more closely resemble *stage hypnotism*. Public presentations of hypnotism require skills and techniques far different from those used in the kinds of one-to-one situations covered here in Volume I. As far as I know, *this will be the very first time ever that elements used in the practice of stage hypnotism are compared with hypnosis as performed in antiquity* (particularly in the guise of magic by ancient magicians and miracle workers). So, you'll learn a great deal about the finer points of conducting a modern stage hypnotist show, and about the kinds of amazing feats one can commonly see demonstrated at one. This will give you a firm foundation for analyzing events found in ancient texts that resemble the sorts of things that happen during a typical stage hypnotist show. The main focus here will be on magic and magicians, those most likely to use this kind of hypnosis in the course of their public performances.

Prophecy was as much a magical phenomenon as it was a religious one; so in this volume we will investigate how hypnosis was used in that way. And though ventriloquism is now used for entertainment purposes, back then it was used for prophetic purposes—just as hypnosis was—by those who practiced the late-antique religious practice called theurgy. All these will be covered in Volume II.

We will also be examining the practice of hypnodelic therapy, a modern analog of what may have been an ancient practice of combining hypnosis with psychotropic drugs. Our modern category of “trance” is a broad one, and is often used to include altered states of consciousness induced by psychotropic drugs. Though present trends in academia emphasize the importance of the usage of psychedelics and other psychotropic drugs in ancient religious practices, hypnosis (as we will see) may well have been absolutely necessary for priming and preparing those who made use of such drugs. There must have been some way to channel the chaotic and otherwise unmanageable effects of these powerful mind-altering experiences into the kinds of set goals required for a coherent and memorable initiation, such as the goals required by the famous Eleusinian mysteries.

And of course, other types of psychological phenomena will be explored as they were manifested in ancient contexts. Superstition as it was understood in antiquity will be discussed, along with the concept of "the evil eye;" the idea of belief itself; how the various philosophical schools of the Greco-Roman world subscribed to different ideas about belief; and much more.

Volume III has a change of perspective entirely different from what we find in both Volumes I and II—its focus of discussion changes to the biblical Middle East where early Christianity first emerged, long before it had flourished to the point when it eventually gained hegemony over the entire Western world. We'll explore hypnotic aspects of important Christian concepts such as resurrection and glossolalia (speaking in tongues), and see how hypnosis was used to treat what Jews and Christians in antiquity understood as demonic possession and exorcism, but has become a manifestation of multiple personalities (MPD) for modern psychologists. (Of course, demonic possession was not the only kind of possession—there were beneficial types of possession as well; and early Christianity required demonstrations of possession by the Holy Spirit from prospective members before they could officially be considered full members of the cult.)

We will also review and analyze the hypnotic techniques described in the mystic rites practiced in esoteric circles of Judaism during that time, some of which seem to have been adapted for use by the earliest Christians

(which is where my minor in Old Testament theology *really* kicks in). Also, where was this mysterious "Kingdom of God" Jesus was constantly referring to? We may have an answer for that, the merits of which you can judge for yourself.

Finally, in Volume III we will consider hypnotism as it appears to have been used by Jesus and his disciples to produce many of the miracles attributed to them, particularly the stories of healings they were said to have performed. Although this is a controversial subject for most believers, the latter might find comfort in the fact that—as it turns out—not only was Jesus very skilled in hypnotism (particularly when it came to healing), but he was also *a very honest hypnotist.*[1]

There have been more than a few efforts made in the past to explain the miracles performed by Jesus and his disciples as being the result of hypnotic influence; but no books written about this so far have really succeeded in putting forward any persuasive evidence. Most have been summarily dismissed and scoffed at by Christian apologists over the years for various reasons, none of which would pass muster for anyone who actually knows and understands the true powers of suggestion and hypnosis. Objections to theories suggesting the use of hypnosis in the New Testament abound, especially online. However, the amateur arguments put forward by such critics only serve to betray their utter ignorance of hypnosis and everything about it, and what it can do. In Volume III, this hypothesis will be reviewed, resurrected, and renewed once again—this time backed up by convincing evidence and compelling examples which (as far as I know) have never been presented anywhere else. All the various objections made against hypnosis being used by Jesus and his followers spread unopposed across the internet and in print media for decades now will be answered and addressed in full. This will help to disabuse such critics of the cherished but uninformed assumptions they have relied upon for years to object to this theory.

In these volumes of *Ancient Hypnosis* we will explore an ancient mystery that has fascinated scholars and others for over 300 years: did the peoples of ancient Egypt and the Greco-Roman world know about (or at least use) hypnotic techniques? This debate has been going on since Anton Mesmer first discovered hypnosis and introduced it to modern Western civilization as "mesmerism" in the late 1700s. But as the term and the concept of hypnotism as we know it did not exist in antiquity, no one is really exactly sure what kinds of hypnotic techniques they might have used, or how they performed them. Thus, it has remained a mystery ever since (until now, that is).

In fact, it was obvious and apparent to some of the very first mesmerists and hypnotists that many of the fantastic phenomena described by ancient authors *must* have been accomplished by using some of the techniques they had just discovered. This is clearly expressed in the 1887 edition of *L'Hypnotisme et les Religions ou la fin du merveilleux*, which was written by an anonymous author and republished in 2013 as *Hypnotism and Religion: The production of miracles by mental suggestion* in a translation by Steve Smith.[2] In this book, the author—a hypnotist—dared to put forward the idea of "Jesus the hypnotist" by suggesting that the miraculous healings found in the New Testament were due to hypnotic influence (this at a time when it was still dangerous to question the authority of the Bible and established Christian doctrine—hence the book's anonymous authorship). I happened to experience this same epiphany all on my own early on, when I was first learning about hypnosis and finding out about the seemingly impossible things it can actually make possible—the nature of Biblical miracles readily came to my mind at the time. This may well have been the first thing that motivated me to eventually write this and the following two volumes of *Ancient Hypnosis*.

Surviving writings covering a span of over 4,000 years give us tantalizing hints that point to occurrences of unusual psychological phenomena, and to the advanced use of trance by the ancient peoples of Egypt and the Greco-Roman world. These texts start with the oldest Pyramid Texts (dated to about 2400–2300 BCE), and extend all the way through the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE. We also have fascinating buildings and artifacts, including healing temples from ancient Greece and Rome decorated with ceramic votive testimonials that depict the arms, legs, and other body parts healed in the temples there.

Although there have been literally hundreds of books written about hypnotism over the past 200 years, these three volumes of *Ancient Hypnosis* stand apart as being *the very first books ever published that are devoted to exploring the subject of hypnotism in ancient times*.

Up to now, none of the efforts made to match enigmatic ancient descriptions of anomalous phenomena with any of their modern hypnotic

counterparts have been successful. This has not been for lack of trying, but rather because of the limited range of hypnotic techniques that have been considered up to now. However, with additional knowledge of advanced hypnotic techniques, rarely-discussed elements of stage hypnotism, and recently discovered "exotic trance states" (that are both like, and unlike, traditional hypnosis), there are many more answers available than ever before to explain the phenomena described in ancient texts.

We can be pretty sure that the people of ancient times, being human like ourselves, experienced trance in pretty much the same way we do now. But trance isn't something that just "happens" *to* us… *trance is something humans do* . And not only is trance something we do; it's often done with others in a learned group cultural context. Even the simple act of singing or playing instruments together serves to synchronize the participant's brainwaves to create a corresponding shared trance experience.

However, what's most notable and relevant about trance for our purposes here is the wide range of human behaviors available in trance that are otherwise inaccessible and unavailable to us in our normal conscious waking state, *and vice versa*. For, as you will learn, trance can render the seemingly impossible possible, as well as making ordinarily easy behaviors suddenly impossible to perform. In this book we will focus on the vast repertoire of anomalies and unique abilities *only* available during trance, in our effort to find the most rational and historically viable explanations for mental behaviors and trance-like phenomena described in antiquity.

An important feature of trance is that one can be "inducted" (guided) from one's normal waking state into a state of trance through a process we *now* call hypnosis. Historically, hypnosis has become our word for a process that enables a person's consciousness to shift from his or her normal waking awareness to *a particular kind* of trance state technically described as *artificial somnambulism*. Anyone who has ever watched a hypnotist stage show is already familiar with the wide array of astonishing behaviors and phenomena that can be elicited from individuals shepherded into artificial somnambulism by a competent and skilled hypnotist—hypnotic effects that we'll examine in detail later on. (I strongly urge you to watch, if you haven't already, a complete performance of a hypnotist show online or, even better, a live performance in Las Vegas).

Even if the extra-normal possibilities of trance were restricted to what we know from conventional hypnosis, that in itself would provide us with a great deal in the way of resources useful to our inquiry. However, recent developments indicate other trance states *above and beyond conventional hypnosis* that are able to manifest different phenomena, and require different inductions, than those that lead to conventional hypnosis and artificial somnambulism. For now, we'll call these *"exotic trance states"* to differentiate them from common hypnosis. Hypnosis, in conjunction with these other, relatively newly discovered trance states, requires a new appraisal of trance paradigms that can help us understand the modus operandi behind ancient cases of trance and psychological phenomena (experienced by the ancients as supernatural in nature) that have eluded modern interpretation up to now.

However, the main challenge I have encountered in writing this book is not finding and presenting evidence for the use of hypnosis in antiquity, but providing *what you, the reader, needs to know about trance and hypnosis in the first place* to get us where we need to go. Unlike established academic disciplines, there is at present surprisingly little or no consensus among professional hypnotists (or even medical researchers) as to the exact nature of hypnosis, how it works, and what can be done with it in the real world.

This is especially troublesome because hypnotists as a whole have historically been unwilling, or unable, to separate the hypnosis they do from their own personal spiritual and metaphysical notions, in the process often imposing on their subjects extraneous beliefs that are completely unrelated to the hypnosis at hand. This longstanding and constant failure of hypnotists to distinguish what they do from magic and religion means that they are making on the hypnotized person an unnecessary and morally questionable imposition which often violate the latter's own private beliefs. Not only that, but continuing to do so does an ongoing disservice to the entire field of hypnosis, and to any hypnotists seeking academic credibility or acknowledgement for what they're doing. I'm sorry, but hypnosis does not need crystals, angels, spirit guides, or the addition of any other purely metaphysical constructs for it to work. *Hypnosis works just fine all by itself...*

In this and the following two volumes, our journey will take us to unexpected places and through obscure doctrines on our way to explaining the practice of hypnotism in antiquity, as well as exposing you along the way to interesting psychological phenomena that occurred to them just as they do to us today.

CHAPTER
1

CHAPTER 1: A Scientific View of Trance

Occam’s razor

“Non sunt multiplicanda entia praeter necessitatem! ("Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity!")”

—William of Ockham (1288–1348 CE)

…And the numbers of extraneous “entities” that need confabulation in order to support traditional views about the supernatural character of ancient magic are legion, indeed. Such views require us to accept the existence of entire invisible worlds and universes to support them. A prime example is Plato's "world of forms," posited for philosophical reasons, which he claimed to be more real than our own. Even the particular historical context we’re working with here assumed a reality infested with disease and insanity-causing demons, a belief that necessitated a further multiplication of entities. Following Occam’s example, the simpler the explanation and the fewer elements required to explicate it, the better (and therefore, more likely) it is. So, we will restrict our discussion to natural explanations that are acceptable to modern scientific sensibilities and methods.

“The invisible and the non-existent look very much alike.”

—Huangbo Xiyun, Chinese Zen Master (died 850 CE)

Simply stated, things like hypnosis, stage illusions, mentalists, psychedelic experiences, and even ventriloquist dummies *are real* for our purposes here. Metaphysical speculations, religious supernaturalism, magic, past lives, astrology, demonic possession, and undetectable “subtle” energies *are not.* These distinctions will help us avoid entirely the inexorable confusion suggested by Huangbo’s elegantly expressed observation above. By making this distinction, we also avoid wasting our time on unnecessary disagreements that are analogous to arguing over whether Paul Bunyan’s socks were white or actually red.[3]

“It is only the inferior thinker who hastens to explain the singular and the complex by the primitive shortcut of supernaturalism…”

—H.P. Lovecraft “Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family," written 1920; first published in The Wolverine, No. 9 (March 1921)

I am taking special care to highlight this particular aspect of our approach for the sake of many of my fellow hypnotists, since unfortunately *so many hypnotists seem unwilling or unable to separate the reality of what they do from religion or metaphysics.* It is worth stating again my opinion that the persistent and reckless conflation of hypnosis with the extraneous personal metaphysical beliefs of many hypnotists has continued to be a major stumbling-block responsible for keeping the field of hypnosis from becoming the full-fledged credible and respected academic discipline it truly deserves to be.

“By definition, a miracle is the least probable occurrence for any given instance.”

—Bart Ehrman, modern American New Testament scholar .

So supernatural explanations are not only irrelevant to our considerations, but completely antithetical to our enterprise here. This is because *they are precisely the kind of things whose accretions we must reject and peel away before we can shed light on what might plausibly be the real, natural mechanics at work.*

Endogenous vs. Exogenous Generation of Hypnotic Phenomena

Central to any discussion about the phenomena we will be examining is whether the processes are self-generated (endogenous), or are caused by external (exogenous) non-human forces or by some "other" outside of us. The distinction between self-generated phenomena, and behavior supposedly influenced by invisible outside entities or forces, is crucial to our discussion.

This is a quite different matter, however, from Mesmer's (the modern discoverer of hypnotism) attribution of hypnotic effects to animal magnetism. As grandiose and wrong as his notions were, at least he still attributed his feats to his own self-generated energy and not to some external non-human agencies or entities.

For hypnosis-related phenomena then, ascribing any effects to invisible non-human agencies would obviously constitute a gross violation of Occam's razor, the rule we cited above. In the end, *exteriorizing causation can only lead back to the old pre-scientific demonic model of medicine,* a now-obsolete and totally discredited theory that assigns the majority of unexplained phenomena (including diseases) to invisible entities or demonic forces.[4] Not only that, but there is evidence from scientific research that *belief in demons can lead to impaired mental health.* Findings indicate that "the negative effect size of belief in demons on mental health is larger in magnitude than all other religion-related predictors."[5]

"There are so many unpleasant things in the world already that there is no use in imagining any more."

—Lucy Maud Montgomery (author) *Anne Of Avonlea*

Yet the widespread and persistent sense that some outside entity or entities intrude now and then to interfere with our intentions and personal experiences is not exactly totally unfounded. The perceived presence of "the other" can now be verified, due to our understanding of subconscious[6] mechanisms and how they affect our behavior beyond our conscious awareness. So, thanks to current psychological and neurological research, it

seems “the other” may not really be “other” at all…

We ARE "The Other"

Our common experience of "the other," and Occam's razor, argues for self-generated constructs that only *seem* as if their perceived presence is external to ourselves. In a very real way, they do originate from outside of us—but more in the sense of "outside of what we *think* comprises us," which then leads back to our own endogenous subconscious presence and its vast, dominating influence on our behavior beyond our conscious awareness.

"The Timaeus indicates the relation of this guiding spirit to ourselves: it is not entirely outside of ourselves; is not bound up with our nature; is not the agent in our action; it belongs to us as belonging to our Soul…"

—Plotinus, *Ennead*, L3.C5 (compiled by his student Porphyry in 270 CE)

In the above quote from Plotinus, the father of Neoplatonism, he answers the crucial question: Is one's daemon (somewhat equivalent to our concept of the subconscious mind) endogenous (arising from internal factors) or exogenous (arising from external factors)? His answer: endogenous—due to the principle of unity that maintains that the soul contains the entire intelligible world within itself, *we are our own daemon.*

In fact, each of us already comes fully equipped with our own accompanying "other" as a pre-existing condition, in the sense that functionally we behave as though we have two different minds that run concurrently with one another. That "other," the subconscious mind, really runs the show behind the scenes (answering the ever-lingering question as to why we so often end up doing something other than, or even the opposite of, what we had consciously intended to do).[7] Thus behavior initiated by the subconscious mind, unknown to us and beyond our conscious awareness, is often responsible for much of what we do that *seems* to be instigated from outside of ourselves. At the same time, hypnotic phenomena can generate the perceptions of "the other" and "magic" people can perceive while in trance. Since we often don't notice we're in trance, *this*

could be you!

So, per Occam's razor, there are no good reasons to hypothesize whole new worlds and alternative realities, separate and outside of ourselves, in order to explain (what seem to be) enigmatic metaphysical/religious phenomena that are ultimately psychological or trance-generated, and therefore actually mundane in nature.

Like Dorothy's ruby slippers in the Wizard of Oz, "the other" has been with us the whole time, right under our noses. You don't have to look for pesky, interfering disembodied entities from the Pleiades, or even a universal monarch operating from above, to account for our common experiences of this "other" and its presence[8]. For "the other" isn't just in us, *it is us* , but it operates at a level beyond the scrutiny and control of the conscious mind whose small domain we naturally, but falsely, assume is the totality of who "we" are in reality.

From Metaphysics to Physiological Phenomena

There is now enough neurological evidence to show that the brain can manufacture what were once thought to be metaphysical experiences on its own without any outside intervention, spiritual or otherwise. Following Occam's Law, as quoted above, suggests that accepting this causal approach is preferable to nullifying everything we know about physics, biology, and the physical universe just to accommodate an unexplained phenomenon.

For example, it turns out that 20% of pilots who black out in centrifuge training (g-force induced loss of consciousness, or gLOC) describe the same kinds of characteristics as people who have had near-death experiences (NDEs): tunnels with an alluring bright light; out-of-body experiences; visitations with friends and family; floating; visions of beautiful or fantastic places; paralysis; prior memories and thoughts (one's life flashing before one's eyes); feelings of exquisite euphoria; and so on.[9]

When something we can experience as human beings is found to be attainable by our own innate natural human neurology or artificially reproduced under laboratory conditions, "supernatural" phenomena become just rarely-encountered natural phenomena.

The sensations of felt presences (ghosts), OBEs (out-of-body experiences), and other spiritual experiences have been produced in the laboratory. Non-epileptic seizures can trigger profound religious epiphanies, as can certain types of brain injuries. Some drugs like ketamine can trigger OBEs, not to mention the kinds of otherworldly visions and encounters with

“machine elves” (alien-like self-morphing sentient beings) sometimes experienced by DMT users that are often discussed by the late great psychedelic pioneer Terence McKenna.

There are numerous other instances of research and experimentation being able to elicit experiences of what have long been considered mystical and supernatural phenomena. With new discoveries about the way magnetic fields can influence brain function and how quantum phenomena affect human physiology, there are bound to be new revelations that will shed light on human experiences and behavior that have long been considered to be strictly religious, spiritual, or supernatural in nature.

Context and Current Perspectives

As tempting as it may be to feel smug about how far we’ve come from the ignorant beliefs of our ancient ancestors, it’s helpful to keep a few things in mind.

Research data indicate that one in four people *living in America* (as opposed to, say, the Amazon rainforest) *presently believe the sun revolves around the earth.*[10]

Despite what science has discovered in the past couple of hundred years, most people continue to believe pretty much the same absurd things people everywhere always have. Flat-earth advocates abound on the internet. Psychics talk on TV with dead relatives. Frightened people continue to share their experiences with ghosts and invisible demons, only now they do it online with night vision.[11] That you are reading this now indicates that you are a member of a relatively small and apparently elite minority that knows better.

Indeed, real life already offers us a full set of human challenges—enough to keep the average person busy for a lifetime avoiding its many pitfalls. Yet humans have always seemed to have a propensity to add to their perceived troubles by creating whole imaginary universes infested with hostile demons and vengeful gods that need to be contended with as well.

So, you and I are really not quite as far removed as we might think from the beliefs and subjects you will read about in this book…

CHAPTER
2

CHAPTER 2: Trance and Hypnosis

Definitions: Trance and Hypnosis

Before we can proceed further, it is necessary to briefly define and explain what trance and hypnosis are for the purposes of our inquiry. Literally thousands of books have been written about hypnosis through the years, so there are plenty of resources for the reader who chooses to explore these matters at length outside of our discussion.

“First of all, Herodotus, we must understand the meanings that underlie the words, so that by referring to them, we may be able to reach judgments about our opinions, matters of inquiry, or problems and leave everything undecided as we can argue endlessly or use words that have no clearly defined meaning.”

—Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 37

Hypnotists have always widely disagreed as to the exact nature of trance and hypnosis; I will therefore give my own personal take, based on my own knowledge and experiences as a master hypnotist and hypnosis trainer. The wide diversity of opinions about hypnosis ensures that there will be those who disagree with what I say, but that is unavoidable due to the general lack of consensus. The following sections are intended to provide the non-hypnotist with the most important information about hypnosis and trance that they will need to understand the concepts we present as we go forward. Although trance and hypnosis are as much a part of our lives as sleeping or being awake, exact definitions for both have so far stubbornly eluded characterization; and there is at present no universally agreed-upon way to define them. Again, the following is only my own version as to how we might define them, based on my personal knowledge of trance and hypnosis…

Trance: Definition and Description

Trance is an altered state of mind where you are not asleep, but you're not really awake either; and as we will see, people in ancient times most often described trance as exactly that—being half asleep and half awake. Trance is usually defined broadly as any mental state where we are not our normal waking selves. It occurs naturally whenever we are so focused on our own thoughts that we become temporarily unaware of what's happening in our immediate surroundings.

"But the dreams which are denominated theopemptoi, or sent from God…take place either when sleep is leaving us, and we are beginning to awake, and then we hear a certain voice, which concisely tells us what is to be done; or voices are heard by us, between sleeping and waking, or when we are perfectly awake."

—Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians,* p.12, Trans. Thomas Taylor, 1895

We all experience something *very much like hypnosis* at least twice a day —between being awake and falling asleep at night, and then again between sleep and waking up in the morning. You may have experienced a time when the alarm clock goes off, but you aren't really ready to get out of bed yet. Instead, you choose to remain there for a while, during which time you may have enjoyed a dreamy, drowsy, relaxing, comfortable state of being. You aren't really awake yet, but then you're not really back to sleep either. And it feels *really, really good* . That's what being in hypnosis feels like. Yet the state you are enjoying when this happens to you is not just being half-awake and half-asleep. *It's a distinct state of its own with peculiar properties not available when either asleep or awake.*

As in the above example, it's something that seems to just happen to us in passing, so we just go with the flow and simply enjoy it for what it is. We rarely, if ever, take the time to stop and exploit this kind of altered state to take advantage of the otherwise unobtainable unique mental effects offered

there.

As it turns out, *that's exactly what hypnosis is all about*, the difference between trance and hypnosis being that hypnosis is the result of *intentionally* going into trance as opposed to passively experiencing it when it just happens *to* you as in the example above.

Indeed, trance naturally happens to all of us frequently during the course of our daily lives. Gradations of trance have been proposed ranging from light, to medium, to deep trance states—some hypnotists putting forward schemes that include a dozen or more levels of trance at different levels of awareness, distinguished by their various producible effects. It ranges from something simple, like a daydream or forgetting yourself while getting lost in a good book or movie and not hearing someone call your name (light trance states), all the way to the deepest accessible states of hypnosis where people can appear to be in a coma, or even easily mistaken for dead (which are considered *very* deep trance states). Trance can and does occur naturally to us all on our own; or we can be guided into trance by someone else (which is when trance becomes hypnosis).

Many of the activities we humans happen to enjoy naturally generate some kind of trance while we do them; such trances are enjoyable whether they are a form of escapism and relief from the stresses of everyday life, or a creative outlet in which we become so totally immersed in some pleasant activity that we end up losing all track of time in the process. Or you may happen to enjoy the kind of trance you feel from experiencing the ambience of a raucous dance club with its intentionally disorienting colored strobe lights and ear-shattering super-loud music, which are there for exactly this purpose—to generate an exciting and pleasurable trance state for you, the customer. So, it turns out that most of the things you like to do involve some kind of trance. Why? Because, generally speaking, *trance feels really, really good!*

Another example of trance is when you are driving your car on a trip down a long highway and end up getting lost in your own thoughts as you pass your intended off-ramp (a common kind of trance known as "highway hypnosis"). Sexual arousal involves yet another kind of trance, one that women have been able since time immemorial to elicit from the men they desire by means of instinctively cultivated methods (i.e., the art of

seduction, which is often assisted by alluring makeup and the tantalizing exotic odors coming from the perfumes they wear). Music can also act as an extremely powerful trance generator, as when you happen to hear a certain song that takes you straight back to another, maybe happier, time in your life. Maybe, like a lot of people, you enjoy dancing for the kind of trance you experience from the monotonous and rhythmic back-and-forth kinesthetic movements performed while doing it (hence "trance music"). I'm sure you get the idea by now…

At the more extreme end of the trance spectrum, trance also includes the profound mystic and ecstatic experiences attributed throughout time to important religious figures all over the world. The ability to generate the mental states conducive to achieving such transcendent spiritual goals always requires some form of trance to make the transition from here to there. Meditation can be considered a type of trance, as well as mindfulness and other such mental disciplines. But then there's the person who appears to be “out of it” after having just survived a traumatic auto accident which had automatically thrown them into a temporary trance state (although certainly not a light one like daydreaming, or the sort experienced while reading a good book). Altered states induced by psychedelics or other psychoactive drugs are also considered types of trance, although with obvious major differences from the other kinds of trance we will mostly be discussing here.

Perhaps trance and hypnosis are so difficult to define because of our general lack of words and terms to describe them. But, as mentioned earlier, it’s one of those things that can be very hard to describe but “we all know it when we see it.” It can be more difficult, however, to recognize when we ourselves are in trance simply because we are not fully present and self-aware while it’s happening to us. It often happens that only after the fact do we notice the passage of time, and then realize that our minds had temporarily wandered somewhere else. Trance is what people do and have always done—a natural and often mundane part of being human.

A big component of spirituality and religious experience is driven by trance. In her book *Religion: Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change,* Erika Bourguignon, an eminent Austrian anthropologist, found in a survey that of 488 cultures anthropologists have examined in detail, 90%

practiced religious trance and/or possession. Her data indicate that religiously-defined trance pervades the entire world, and is found at many different levels of social development. We can be fairly certain, then, that the percentage of cultures practicing religious trance in ancient times would have been much the same as it is now, if not even higher.

Hypnosis: Definition and Description

According to the American Psychological Association, trance is:

> **A state of consciousness involving focused attention and reduced peripheral awareness characterized by an enhanced capacity for response to suggestion. (APA, 2014)**

Trances can occur spontaneously or intentionally. *Hypnosis is a subset of "trance"* in which the trance is intentionally induced. In other words, whereas hypnosis is popularly thought of as something "done to" someone, and self-hypnosis is something people do intentionally themselves, trance is a change of state without reference to any particular cause. So, trance that occurs without having been initiated by an outside agent cannot technically be called hypnosis, only trance; and whether a trance is hypnotic or not depends on its causal context.

In common usage, the word hypnosis can refer to both *the process* of inducing trance, and *the resulting state of trance*. Although you will commonly see the terms "hypnosis" and "trance" being used interchangeably since all hypnosis is trance (*though not all trance is hypnosis*), it's important to keep these distinctions in mind.

In reality, nearly all hypnosis is self-hypnosis. Generally speaking, a hypnotist cannot force you to go into hypnosis any more than someone can force you to go to sleep. Perhaps the most accurate way to look at a hypnotist is as a guide or operator, one who knows what to say and how to say it in ways sufficient for you to find *your own way* into hypnotic trance. Once you “know the way,” you are theoretically capable of going into hypnosis voluntarily on your own (self-hypnosis). This makes hypnosis *a learned skill*. But most often, the assistance of a hypnotist is used because it ensures a quick and expedient induction into hypnosis to focus on what

needs to be done there.

Are there people who can't be hypnotized? Well...psychotics, people with IQ's below 70, or anyone dysfunctional to the point where he or she is unable to pay attention, understand, or follow simple directions will generally be un-hypnotizable.

Then of course there are those who are unwilling under any circumstances to be hypnotized—people with fundamentalist religious beliefs for example (although it's okay for them to be put into a deep trance just before the offering plate is passed in front of them...but that's another can of worms).

Granted, those who cannot be hypnotized do constitute some measurable percentage of the general population; but the vast majority are perfectly able to be guided into hypnosis, provided that they are willing to do so of course. It's nearly impossible (except by way of more advanced covert techniques) to have someone go into trance against their will, just as you can't really make someone relax against their will. Hypnosis is the ability to voluntarily agree to enter this altered state, use its unique properties for specific purposes, and then (to put it in contemporary terms) return back to the waking state reprogrammed with the desired changes acquired there. So, contrary to popular opinion, hypnosis is generally not a lack of personal control over one's own behavior; rather, in most modern contexts it's more of a ritual designed to allow you the opportunity to intentionally *achieve control* over a mental state that ordinarily seems to "just happen" to you, and then use its unique properties to accomplish things normally considered impossible.

A prominent feature of hypnosis is that our conscious inner dialogue, the things we silently say to ourselves all day while we're awake, often stops completely for a time. In such cases, our inner dialogue is replaced by the words of the hypnotist which act as our new inner dialogue—hearing with "new ears," as it were.

Thus, in a very real way one's ability to enter hypnosis *is a skill* that can be learned and enhanced with experience. One of the features that often makes acquiring trance skills so easy is that it almost always feels really, really good. Thus, the euphoria we naturally derive from experiencing

hypnosis can, in itself, often provide sufficient motivation for many people to master it further.

Terminology: Hypnotism vs. Hypnosis

Technically, hypnotism is the art of inducing hypnosis, whereas hypnosis is the artificially induced state. However, in this book I am using the terms interchangeably, as is common usage.

Types of Hypnotic Phenomena

To give you an idea of the many possibilities that only hypnosis—and the somnambulistic state in particular—can provide, here are just a few of the regularly achievable effects that a hypnotist can suggest to a person in hypnosis:

Anesthesia—particularly useful for surgical patients who cannot tolerate the methods normally used in hospitals. Analgesia (pain relief without loss of consciousness or total loss of feeling and movement) and anesthesia (loss of sensation with or without loss of consciousness) can occur without the use of anesthetic gases, chemicals, or injections. Useful for conducting pain-free amputations and C-sections.

Pain management—effective in removing the need for opiates for long-time sufferers of chronic pain.

Painlessness or decreased pain in childbirth—sometimes able to completely remove pain associated with childbirth.

Amnesia—the ability to cause hypnotic subjects to forget things (like their own names, a common stage hypnosis trick). It can be used in hypnotherapy to help a client forget a traumatic event.

Hypermnesia—vivid or complete memory recall of the past. Can be especially useful for finding hidden valuables whose whereabouts have been forgotten. Can also be used by witnesses to remember important details for the investigation of serious crimes (although not allowable in court testimony, since it's easy for witnesses to "remember" what didn't

happen because false memories have been implanted in them beforehand, either accidentally or deliberately).

Catalepsy—the ability to immobilize limbs and cause people to appear frozen in position like mannequins, often for seemingly impossible amounts of time (commonly featured at stage hypnosis shows).

Body control—the ability to change what the hypnotized subject can and cannot physically do. Common hypnotic tricks include making it impossible for the hypnotized subject to separate touching body parts (hands are stuck together; eyelids won't open); "gluing" the subject's butt to the chair, their feet to the floor, or their hand to the hypnotist. "Involuntary" arm levitation (causing the subject's arm to rise "by itself" and hang in the air) is a common feature routinely demonstrated at hypnotism stage shows.

Autonomic control—controlling automatic body functions that are normally involuntary and beyond conscious control, such as flushing, salivation, tear production, laughter, and blood flow. Stopping bleeding is used in emergency and medical hypnosis.

Age regression—the ability to send someone back to an earlier age in his or her life. Useful in hypnotherapy, especially for resolving past traumas.

Elimination of psychosomatic illnesses and diseases—including skin diseases like psoriasis and eczema, types of paralysis, types of blindness or the inability to speak, and many other ailments whose reasons are psychological (often from stress or severe psychological trauma).

Time distortion—the ability to cause someone to believe the passage of time spent during hypnosis was shorter or longer than it really was.

Post-hypnotic suggestions—installing triggers during hypnosis that will automatically cause the subject to unconsciously experience or do something when the given trigger occurs after emerging from hypnosis. Triggers are usually words, phrases, or the presence of some person or object: "After emerging from hypnosis, whenever you see the color blue you will spontaneously and automatically experience feelings of peaceful calm and tranquility."

Positive hallucinations—the ability to have someone fully experience things that aren't there or that do not exist. This may include hallucinating and interacting with people, creatures, gods, and other entities, or having someone vividly experience a voyage to—and/or total immersion in—an imaginary world or reality (often called "guided imagery," "guided meditation," or "guided visualization").

Negative hallucinations—the ability to cause someone to *not* experience things that *are* really there.

False memories—the ability to implant memories of things someone has never really done or experienced.

Mystical, religious, and metaphysical phenomena.

In trance, people are highly suggestible and may spontaneously and uncritically hallucinate ghosts, voices, dead loved ones, supernatural beings, past lives, etc. Because trance (especially somnambulism) allows for the deliberate *creation* of hallucinations and memories, *hypnosis can generate an experience or memory of virtually any religious, mystical, or metaphysical phenomenon imaginable.*

The ability to cause the subject to believe whatever the hypnotist says next—allows subjects to experience or accomplish things that they would normally consider impossible by suspending the self-limiting beliefs that were preventing them from actually doing these things in reality. In other words, *allowing people to perform at their true, full physical and mental potential* without the negative pre-judgements that normally lead them to completely sabotage their efforts in advance.

A cursory examination of the wide range of achievable phenomena on this list reveals the almost infinite, magical-like possibilities for hypnosis in achieving religious, medical, and metaphysical effects. We will see how these kinds of hypnotic effects were achieved in ancient times as well, by explaining how their production was integrated into the religious and magical rituals used by their practitioners to obtain similar results.

Trance States Are So Mundane that Newbies Often Cannot Recognize They Were Hypnotized

Ironically, trance states are so routine and personally familiar to us all (with the most profound hypnotic and other trance states coming and going regularly) that subjects emerging from even the "deepest" trance states often deny that they had any kind of "trance experience" at all. This reaction, however, is due not so much to an intransigent denial on the part of the subject, as it is to their own inability to distinguish between what they have experienced and the unfamiliar trance state *they were expecting* to experience.

We Are All Trained to Go into Trance from Our Mother's Very First Lullabies

Lullabies are really our first induction experiences, performed for us by mothers everywhere. But a lullaby is not softly sung to lull a baby from being awake into trance, but even further…all the way to sleep. Lullabies are not simply mere distractions to shift a baby's behavior—there is the element of fascination naturally generated by the mother's voice, which is capable of maintaining an infant's attention long enough to influence his or

her transition from awake to asleep.

Trance and Hypnosis: Perennial and Natural Human Behaviors

Trance is a natural human behavior; so even if all of our knowledge about hypnosis were to suddenly disappear, it wouldn't take long for some clever and observant individuals to rediscover and apply it all over again. For any one of the palettes of possibilities being offered to us, there's always someone who will ask "what can I do with this?"—hence hypnosis.

Although the unscientific explanations people put forward as to why and how it works would differ widely from culture to culture, the successful techniques they would discover or stumble upon would likely be the same or similar as those routinely used today, if not more efficacious.

"It may well be the absence rather than the presence of trance that is pathological."

—John Dominic Crossan (Theologian) Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography

Knowing this, it seems more than likely that any persistent and stable cultures would eventually formalize their collective knowledge concerning hypnotism. Thus, we may imagine that various long-lasting civilizations such as the Mayans, the Chinese, and the Hittites most likely had their own home-grown brands of hypnotism that were eventually institutionalized in ways appropriate to their own cultures. This is difficult to verify, however, since the particular words cultures other than the Greeks might have used for hypnosis can—like terminology in general—be linguistically elusive due to the subtleties and uncertainties of translating dead languages. Nor should the fact that my particular academic background and professional training limits our discussions to ancient Egypt and the Greco-Roman world be taken to imply that different forms of hypnotism were not also known and practiced by other ancient civilizations outside the scope of our inquiry, just as they currently are in many non-Western cultures.

In fact, forms of hypnosis practiced outside the West may be better at and more efficient in inducing trance, due to the fact that they are often

comingled with religious and spiritual rituals that are sanctioned and maintained by powerful cultural traditions. Furthermore, most of these practices include dancing, monotonous drumming, and communal singing —all of which greatly enhance the onset of trance in ways Western cultures have long since abandoned (except in the case of those forms still used today by religious sects whose services use dancing and singing to generate trance for their worshippers).

Somnambulism: Definition and Description

The "crown jewel" for a hypnotist is for his or her subject to attain the state called artificial somnambulism. The term comes from the similarity between hypnosis and somnambulism, which is a fancy way of saying "sleepwalking," and the fact that this hypnotic state can be artificially generated by a hypnotist. Sleepwalking seemed to be the closest natural analog to the phenomenon the earliest mesmerists found they were able to produce artificially when hypnotism was first discovered; and *nowadays artificial somnambulism is most commonly just called "somnambulism" when writing or speaking about this particular level of deep hypnosis.* Although people in the state of somnambulism display a general passivity and lack of initiative, it is while in that state that they are able to perform feats which often seem impossible. These feats are regularly demonstrated in the skits performed during a typical hypnosis stage show—hypnotized volunteers onstage being told, for example, to freeze in position who will hold that exact pose for unbelievably long periods of time, or having wild, screaming orgasms with just a few words or a touch from the hypnotist. But it's also the state wherein beliefs can be permanently reprogrammed and changed for the subject upon his or her emergence from hypnosis (as hypnotherapists routinely do in their sessions for smoking cessation, weight loss, etc.).

Typically, a person in somnambulism feels and appears extremely calm and relaxed, both mentally and physically. A common characteristic of people in somnambulism is that their eyes roll up underneath their eyelids from the exquisite relaxation they experience; but otherwise, they do not feel or act much differently than normal (which in the past caused confusion as to whether hypnosis was even a real thing or not, a debate that has been

settled only relatively recently with the advent of advanced diagnostic imaging capable of verifying that, indeed, it is).

This is also the reason why some hypnotized subjects, after emerging from trance,[12] are often not sure whether they were really hypnotized or not, the experience having felt cozily familiar rather than weird or odd as they often expect it to be. It is not unusual for some people to find hypnosis so exquisitely relaxing that they experience a kind of euphoria and profound feelings of serene inner peace they may have never experienced throughout their entire lives. That's why I generally don't hesitate to hypnotize people, knowing they're going to feel really, really good during their trance experiences (and why I emphasize that aspect of hypnosis over and over again throughout this book).

In somnambulism, the hypnotic subject's critical thinking is temporarily disengaged, such that *whatever the hypnotist says next will be accepted as true* without any critical examination.

Fig. 1 Dave Elman

At first, hypnotists had to train their subjects over multiple sessions before they could gradually reach a level of trance deep enough for the work that can be done there. Those capable of reaching this level were often called "somnambulists." But the innovations to hypnotic inductions made by hypnotist Dave Elman in the early 20th century allow hypnotists today to combine the many sessions it once took to reach somnambulism into one very quick, easy induction. He taught his "Elman Induction" to busy doctors who needed a reliable method of quickly getting patients ready for surgery even though, for various reasons, they could not tolerate regular anesthesia. Elman was the first to train medical professionals academically

in the use of hypnosis.

To this day, the Elman Induction remains the "go-to" induction for practicing hypnotists to quickly bring their subjects into somnambulism. The key to Elman's innovation was the inclusion of multiple eye closures during a single session. We will be looking at this aspect of hypnosis in detail later on in Volume II when we examine the role our eyes play in the production of hypnosis and trance. Dave Elman went on to become one of the greatest influences on how hypnotism is currently practiced and taught to this day.

The main reason why the goal of most hypnotists is to quickly get their subjects into somnambulism is because that's where *whatever the hypnotist says next will be accepted as "true;"* the exception being if the subject holds an extreme personal objection to what's being said. That exception is precisely why what a hypnotist says to the subject is called a "suggestion," and not a "command." Because, generally speaking, someone in hypnosis retains the ability to not respond if he or she chooses not to. So hypnotists give suggestions to their subjects. This is true whether or not they say the word "command," as many of the old-timey hypnotists used to do when addressing their subjects.

This is more or less how it works during modern hypnotherapy, where hypnosis is only practiced with the full consent of the subject to be hypnotized. But of course, there are many nefarious ways to "trick" someone into trance for malicious purposes without them knowing it—the hypnotized Russian bank teller who ends up unconsciously handing piles of money to a skillful gypsy, for example.

Hypnosis subjects are often reassured by the hypnotist that they will not do anything in hypnosis that they wouldn't ordinarily do while awake. For example, if a hypnotist told you to kill your mother, you would more than likely refuse to do so (and probably angrily "pop" out of trance at its mere insinuation). But if the hypnotist told you that that person was not really your mother, but an evil alien impersonating her and hell-bent on killing you, it's possible you might temporarily believe him and end up murdering her in reality. (Note: There is reason to believe something like this happened to Sirhan Sirhan, the assassin of Robert Kennedy—he had all the indications of someone hypnotized beforehand specifically to carry out that mission.)

So, people can be unknowingly tricked into hypnosis by someone skilled at "covert" hypnosis. Indeed, there now exists a whole cottage industry devoted to training men in how to use covert hypnosis to seduce women (called "speed seduction"). But in general, this is the dark realm of con men, CIA shenanigans, and other such criminal activities (not to mention advertising agencies).

With a few notable exceptions, our inquiry here will not be concerned with any hypnosis-related abuses that may have occurred in antiquity. Perhaps the closest parallels we'll be looking at to this kind of abuse have to do with the somewhat grey areas wherein hypnotic techniques are used to persuade and manipulate, particularly through rhetoric (the ancient art of persuasion) and in performances by ancient magicians (to be examined at length in Volume II).

The most relevant feature of somnambulism for our investigation of ancient hypnosis is that *any* spiritual or religious phenomenon we can describe may be brought to life and experienced as utterly real, because among somnambulism's remarkable effects is the deliberate production of vivid hallucinations and false memories. *This was as true in antiquity as it is now.*

The easiest doorway to any state is somnambulism, and it's easy to understand why: In somnambulism, any of the skills and abilities within the grasp of human beings are possible, *including the ability to access any of the other trance states attainable at that particular time and place at the suggestion of the hypnotist.*

What are hypnotists and what do they do?

A hypnotist is anyone who is able, by using hypnotic techniques, to conduct another person (or people) into trance regardless of what the hypnotist may believe about what they're doing, how they're doing it, or how incorrect their presumptions about hypnosis may be.

Modern hypnosis generally aims to get subjects into the trance state called somnambulism, where useful effects are easily produced. The practice of hypnotism may be performed without any deep knowledge of the full panoply of inductions and producible phenomena made possible by formal training. Nor, even now, does formal training in hypnotism require more than an average intelligence to be successful; it often takes knowledge of just one or a few effective hypnotic techniques.

Many of the people practicing hypnotism in ancient times were probably "one-trick ponies" who could only pull off one or just a couple of techniques. Others may have picked up a few more along the way; but every once in a while, there would inevitably emerge a few special individuals who had somehow mastered a wide range of techniques and became virtuosos in the art, whether by their own devices or by way of traditions handed down to them.

Hypnotism and Belief

“Men of broader intellect know that there is no sharp distinction betwixt the real and the unreal...”

—H.P. Lovecraft

Hypnotists, and those practicing hypnosis, manipulate and utilize *belief itself* to produce specific behaviors and outcomes, some impossible to elicit from people while in their normal waking states. This can be done by having the hypnotized subject imagine something so vividly that what they experience feels "more real than real;" and if they remembered it, they will file it away in their memory banks along with everything else that *really* happened to them. And if, later on, they happen to have the same or a similar experience in real life, it will be more a matter of "been there, done that" for them.

It turns out that the human mind cannot distinguish *between what has been vividly imagined, and what has been actually experienced in reality.*[13] Hypnotists utilize this fact to create for their subjects new memories of experiences that never really occurred.

This is how the hypnotic rehearsal of death and dying conducted during ancient initiations worked for the benefit of the individual when and if he or she finally faced and experienced death. Rather than possibly dying in a state of fear, uncertainty, and panic at what is happening to them, it becomes a familiar matter of "been there, done that." This allows them to re-experience in their final moments the reassurance they received from their initiatory simulation and rehearsal of death. Having dispensed with the uncertainty of the experience they might otherwise have had to go through, they are able to spend their final moments in peace and serenity because they "know" the blissful fate awaiting them in the afterlife.

"We think *parts of the brain used to actually perceive an object and to imagine an object overlap*…Thus, a vividly imagined event can leave a memory trace in the brain that's very similar to that of an experienced event. When memories are stored for perceived or imagined objects, some of the same brain areas are involved."

—Ken A. Paller et al, "Neural Evidence That Vivid Imagining Can Lead to False Remembering," Psychological Science (October 15, 2004) [Italics mine]

In the end, it seems somewhat irrelevant whether what they have been indoctrinated to visualize and experience when they pass away from this world is real or not. This is because, as I mentioned, *the human mind cannot distinguish between something that has been vividly imagined from something actually experienced*. So preprogramming ahead of time the ability to be blissfully happy when death finally does arrive (whether the reasons for feeling that way are ultimately true or not), may in the end be a self-compassionate alternative to the terrifying stark impersonal reality of the utter oblivion that may actually await us.

Personal relevance is not unequivocally associated with what is real, since some people experience personal relevance in certain imaginary realms, *including religious ones*…

CHAPTER
3

CHAPTER 3: Types of Hypnotism

Conscious vs. Subconscious Competency in Antiquity

No doubt some ancient practitioners were conscious and cognizant of (what we would now consider) the hypnotic techniques they were using to get results. The majority of magicians, however, attributed the cause of their success to the other elements associated with magic rituals—the boon of a god, the magical words used, intervention by conjured entities, the practitioner's own personal power, and so on.

Like many naturally-acquired skills, hypnotism in antiquity could have been practiced successfully (and often with an impressive consistency) *without the practitioners ever knowing how or why what they did worked.* This is similar to the way some people can be fluent in a language while having little conscious awareness of the grammar or rules behind what they are saying and how they say it. This was as true then as it has been ever since, with practitioners of trance induction attributing the causal mechanisms behind their successful use of hypnosis and trance to scientifically indemonstrable (metaphysical) factors—factors we now know to be entirely extraneous to the process.

Modern vs. Ancient Hypnotism: Generalists vs. Specialists

For the past 250 years or so, most of us in the West have had a pretty good idea about what a hypnotist is and, more or less, what they can do. Hypnotist shows have been a familiar tradition and a ubiquitous form of entertainment, found even now at nearly every county fair in America. The popularity of hypnotism has, in fact, only grown as experiential access to its phenomena can now be accessed instantly using current media technology.

But hypnosis as it has become established in the West has, by some self-perceived necessity, insulated itself by restricting its public practice to its own distinct class of phenomena. For example, only rarely is hypnosis

openly practiced at the same time as "mind reading" (which is practiced by mentalists), stage magic (i.e., illusions), and so on. Nowadays, one goes to see the hypnotist, or the mentalist, or the stage illusionist, or the ventriloquist show, and so on; and very rarely if ever to a presentation that combines any of these skills together. These related phenomenal classes have become traditionally compartmentalized in our culture, particularly in presentation, perhaps to emphasize the uniqueness of their respective art forms. Historically then, the different kinds of public deception have maintained their distinct characters by focusing their audiences' attention on the performance of just one kind of producible phenomenon at a time—basically relegating themselves to "one-trick ponies" (again, perhaps to emphasize the uniqueness of their respective skillsets).

However, this was not the case in antiquity, when hypnotic techniques were rarely practiced in isolation from any of the others that were capable of generating attention and eliciting wonder. Thus, a person practicing hypnotism in antiquity was much more likely to combine it with other mutually-reinforcing feats of wonder in order to intensify their impact on spectators. Mind reading, stage illusion, ventriloquism, and many other "feats of magic" supplemented and supported acts of hypnotism in order to help convince onlookers of the magician's supernatural powers. So, *in antiquity hypnosis was rarely practiced in isolation* as it's come to be performed today. At that time, hypnosis was just one skill among many in a standard magician's toolbox which were combined together to create what seemed to be miracles.

In fact, for an ancient magician, the best results can be achieved when any hypnotic elements are rendered virtually invisible; this allows him to supply subtly, in the background, the verbal content that is intended exclusively for subconscious consumption even as the spectator's conscious mind's attention—and its ability to scrutinize incoming speech—is tied up and completely absorbed by dazzling magical distractions.

The point is that this kind of self-imposed, clear-cut compartmentalization of the different kinds of presentable phenomena used in public performances is peculiar to modern Western culture, as opposed to the kind of conflation of all such wonders one would generally have found on display in ancient performances where hypnotism was used. Hence

ancient magicians were not constrained by our arbitrary modern notions about limiting public displays to the performance of just one type of show at a time; and nothing prevented them from combining together whatever types of skill sets they could find in ways intended to reinforce the hypnotic techniques they used. In fact, it was a no-brainer for anyone in the business that *the more techniques* one could merge together to produce novel demonstrations of power, the more sensation and excitement (along with income and notoriety) could be generated by the performance.

Since we are very unlikely to find examples of the *explicit* practice of hypnotism in antiquity, we must therefore examine those cases most likely to suggest its *implicit* usage within the kinds of activities *recognized by the ancients themselves* . And because hypnotism is an almost exclusively "hands-free" verbal set of skills, the best places for us to look for its ancient analogs will be within ancient practices that also relied heavily upon verbal skills for their execution—such as rhetoric and public performances of magic.

Clinical Hypnotherapy vs. Stage Hypnotism

The two main types of hypnotism are therapeutic hypnosis (also sometimes called clinical hypnosis) and stage hypnotism (hypnosis performed for entertainment and educational purposes). The skills and techniques required for each differ greatly.

Hypnotherapy, the modern term for clinical therapy using hypnosis, is almost always performed on a one-to-one basis in a medical office-like context. The hypnotic subject just sits or lies down comfortably on a bed or recliner in a peaceful setting and listens to the hypnotist talk next to him or her. This is now the primary medical-therapeutic paradigm for using hypnosis to help relieve patients with physical and mental disorders. In a very real sense, it comprises a modern version of ritual—a ritual wherein the hypnotist performs a sequence of prescribed steps, and the subject agrees to devote his or her time, right then and there, to following the hypnotist's verbal directions so that they may obtain the desired results together.

Stage hypnosis, on the other hand, is just what its name implies—a

public performance for entertainment and educational purposes only. It is not done one-on-one in a quiet and comfortable setting like a hypnotherapy session, but performed as comedy in front of an audience. The types of venues can range from high school grad nights to raucous “X-rated” shows performed at a night club or bar. As I mentioned, stage hypnosis shows have been, for centuries, staples at nearly every county fair in America, and continue even today to be featured as prime entertainment at many of them.

Each of these types of hypnotism requires a different range of skillsets from the hypnotist. Hypnotherapy sessions can consist of a hypnotist with a script (who is often derided as a “scriptnotist” by seasoned hypnotists) reading aloud to a pliant subject who listens in comfort. However, experienced hypnotists normally do not need scripts and are able to adlib and improvise “on the fly” as they go, in much the way a pro guitarist can spontaneously improvise and whip out a one-off guitar solo at will.

Of the two, stage hypnosis requires the most skill and experience since unlike hypnotherapists, the stage hypnotist must multi-task—presenting an entertaining show for the audience while at the same time constantly making sure that all the volunteers onstage are safe and happy.

Hypnotherapy can be very forgiving when the hypnotist happens to make mistakes or say the wrong thing during their session. The patient is often able to self-correct the things that he or she hears that are obviously wrong during a session with little or no consequence to the desired outcome.

Stage hypnotists bear a much greater burden of responsibility and mistakes can be not nearly as forgiving. During a stage show people can fall out of their chairs and maybe even lose a tooth or two (or worse). Or they may incur some accident or injury while physically performing the skits required. Sometimes, even with the help of an assistant, things can go wrong. Often not everyone on the stage can be carefully watched all the time, especially when there are a large number of volunteers participating onstage. And for some types of stage hypnotism shows, of course, the hypnotist must take care to make sure everyone on stage keeps their clothes on and refrain from inappropriately touching those next to them (in other words, protect them from each other as well, since the reactions of hypnotized volunteers can often be unpredictable or unexpected—a big part

of its comedic appeal).

I highly recommend that you watch a complete stage show (if you have not already done so). The internet is full of many hilarious and interesting stage hypnosis videos. Or, one can attend any of the live shows performed nearly every night in Las Vegas (all by world-famous and extremely skilled stage hypnotists…)

What is the Best Modern Analogue to Ancient Hypnosis: Clinical/Therapeutic Hypnosis or Stage Hypnotism?

That depends on the context of the various instances we will be examining. For initiations and one-on-one or intimate private rituals, the closest modern parallel would be what happens during a hypnotherapy session; but for public displays, such as a magician might perform on some ancient street corner, we should look at stage hypnotism to guide us as to what might have been really going on…

The brief references scholars have made in passing, when they speculate about the possible ancient use of hypnosis, have always referred to clinical/therapeutic scenarios since the methods used by stage hypnotists are relatively unfamiliar to them and beyond their reach. As mentioned in the introduction, *Volumes II and III will be the first books ever written to investigate examples of scenarios described in ancient texts that are more congruent with the techniques found in stage hypnotism*, and then to compare them with the hypnotic demonstrations performed during the course of a typical modern stage show.

CHAPTER 4: The Physiology of Hypnosis

Half Asleep and Half Awake?

In many of the ancient descriptions of trance we will be examining, people describe themselves or others as being *half-awake and half-asleep* . This is a major "red flag" for us that indicates they are referring to an instance of some kind of trance or hypnosis. Since they have not (as far as we know) provided us with an exact equivalent of our word "hypnosis," this tends to be the closest descriptive indication that they were referring to someone experiencing hypnosis or some other trance state.

During a stage hypnosis show, the hypnotist will tell the subjects onstage to "sleep!" over and over throughout the show (usually in preparation for switching over to the next skit). Why does he tell them that when he knows they are never really asleep at all? The answer is that *this is said merely for the sake of expedience* . The volunteers onstage would be hard-pressed to know how to react if the hypnotist had told them to "go into hypnosis"; but everyone knows what sleep is like...

But despite the fact that the ancients often used this nomenclature to describe being in trance or being hypnotized, the state of hypnosis, and particularly the hypnotic state of somnambulism, *is not* being half-awake and half-asleep (although it can surely feel that way); but is rather its own discrete state with features unique to itself and unattainable during either sleep or wakefulness.

Hypnosis: Faking or Physiological Reality?

Until relatively recently, there were serious scientific doubts as to whether hypnotism was even a real thing. After all, there weren't any obvious physical differences to be observed between a person who was hypnotized and someone who wasn't.

As a result, some scientists studying hypnosis proposed that the phenomenon was due to purely psychosocial causes. There were those in academia who said that seemingly hypnotized people were really just faking it—simply acting out to please the hypnotist and do what he or she expected and asked them to do (despite documented instances of the production of "impossible" phenomena such as full body anesthesia, subjects who were catatonically frozen in place—often in awkward positions for extended periods of time—and so on). The motivation for such seemingly-hypnotized subjects to act this way was conjectured to be the result of social pressures to comply when in a group situation (as when nobody "noticed" that the emperor had no clothes, as the story goes).

It was not until the development of advanced neural scans and brain diagnostics that the actual differences in brain activity between a "normal" brain and a hypnotized one could be identified and observed in real time.

Hypnosis: Physiological Markers and Neurophysiological Findings

In his book *Hypnotherapy*, hypnotist Dave Elman lists five, sometimes very subtle, signs that someone is in hypnosis. These are body warmth, fluttering of the eyelids, increased lacrimation (tearing), the whites of the eyes become red or pinkish, and eyes rolling up into the head. It is very common for people just emerging from trance to look exactly like someone who has just smoked a joint, but the redness quickly subsides after that.

A 2001 study described a woman under hypnosis whose eyes became glazed and whose blinking rate was significantly reduced. Even more important, hypnosis induced a dramatic reduction in eye movements, which are beyond volitional control in healthy adults—none of the thirty control subjects tested could mimic these changes in eye-movement patterns. This

showed that hypnosis does indeed involve an altered mental state which is associated with cognitive and motor changes beyond volitional control. The findings were highly significant, in that they provided the first clear proof demonstrating the existence of a conscious state in humans that had not been scientifically confirmed until then.[14]

In a study published online July 28, 2016 in *Cerebral Cortex*, brain scans were performed on 57 patients while in hypnosis and the following three changes were found:

1. Decrease in activity in the dorsal anterior cingulate, part of the brain's salience network that selects what we pay attention to.
2. Increase in connections between the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and the insula, the main brain-body connection.
3. Reduced connections of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex with the medial prefrontal and the posterior cingulate cortex, likely representing a disconnect between actions and the awareness of those actions.

These changes in brain-area functions and interconnectivity reflect well the behaviors observed in people under hypnosis. With the exception of #2, the majority of changes involve *inhibiting* normal connections between brain areas (which is the opposite of what brain researchers find happening to subjects on psychedelics—their entire brains light up like Christmas trees, as areas that are not normally linked in such ways are interconnected).

Most hypnotists would be interested in one of the more counterintuitive recent findings: that (according to neuroscientist David Eagleman) hypnosis is almost entirely *a left-brain phenomenon*. This goes against years of hypnotists theorizing that hypnosis "brought forth" the ordinarily backgrounded, silent right hemisphere and its corresponding subconscious mind, while temporarily muting the left-hemispheric dominance of the chatty conscious mind.

In other words, it was believed that during hypnosis one was able to talk directly to the subconscious mind/right hemisphere, unhindered by conscious awareness and the filters of the now de-activated left hemisphere. But it turns out that the right hemisphere sits on the sidelines during the

whole process—*i t all happens in the left hemisphere* .

The Conscious Mind vs. the Subconscious Mind

From early on, hypnotists tried to account for the paradoxical phenomena and behaviors that they could produce using hypnosis. The result was their "model of the mind," which included the "dual mind theory"—that we have two minds running simultaneously, each with very different functions and properties which are sometimes at odds with each other. For years, the "Hypnotist's Model of the Mind" has been taught at hypnosis trainings all around the world.

Although this model of the mind has been proven to work quite well in practice over the years, it is actually very controversial and not all of its assumptions have been supported by the research data that has come out in the last few decades. Much of that has to do with unsettled controversies about the nature of hypnosis, and even the fundamental nature of the mind itself. Indeed, if one looks at the anatomy of the human brain, one will not find a subconscious mind or conscious mind anywhere inside it. Yet it is hard to argue against the evidence that humans often behave *as though* they had two separate minds running in tandem and, as mentioned, sometimes at odds with each other.

"The absence of a conscious perception is no proof of the absence of mental activity."

—Plotinus (205–270 CE)

That we have thoughts outside and beyond our conscious awareness is uncontestable. The above quote from the great Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus is the first acknowledgement we have in the history of the West that there is a part of us that thinks beyond what we consciously experience.

In the end, it may very well be that the dogma of the Hypnotist's Mind Model relies as much on faith as any other religious doctrine; yet it still remains a dependable and useful model for the practice of hypnotism up to this day (similar perhaps to the way the old Ptolemaic geocentric theory provided a somewhat functional but inexact model of the solar system prior to the acceptance of Copernicus' more exact heliocentric theory, which

eventually supplanted it).

The Traditional Hypnotist Model of the Mind

Having said that, I wish to briefly present the reader with the mind model hypnotists have used to explain the organization of the human mind from their perspective:

Pretty much every hypnosis trainer teaches that there is the constantly talking conscious mind that reigns while we are awake during the day, and which we normally mistake as the totality of who we are. But the reason why the yakkity-yak conscious mind thinks it's the mind's sole inhabitant is because it is (normally) the only voice to be heard inside there; so it thinks that if it doesn't "take care of business," there is no one else around who will.

"Conscious mind is limited to only a few thoughts to protect it. It is decreed by a merciful Nature that the human brain cannot think of two things simultaneously…"

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*

But then there's the silent subconscious mind that also thinks for us and performs for us everything we automatically do, but which we normally have no way to access and whose various intentions and thoughts we cannot consciously know. Although the yakkity-yak conscious mind thinks it's in charge, it only does so because its inner voice and stream of thought seem to be the only ones around, so it assumes it is alone. But it is actually your silent, consciously inaccessible, vast and powerful subconscious mind that's really "large and in charge" at all times, with the power to inexplicably veto "your" intentions whenever it wants to and implement *at any time* its own preferred actions and behaviors.

"Thinking: the talking of the soul with itself."

—Plato

That is why we often, enigmatically, find ourselves doing something other than what we had originally planned to do without any good

explanation as to why. Inevitably, we instead confabulate (make up) some impromptu explanation, usually unconvincing even to ourselves, as a rationalization for our own inexplicable behavior so we can retain our illusion of control and move on.

“I wouldn't have said off-hand that I had a subconscious mind, but I suppose I must without knowing it.”

—P. G. Wodehouse (Right Ho Jeeves)

Although the trend has been to use the term “unconscious mind,” especially in modern medical research, I prefer to continue to use "subconscious mind." The simple reason for this is that the word “unconscious” carries too much baggage from its most common usage to describe someone who has lost consciousness and become completely unaware of themselves and their surroundings. In many ways, this is exactly the opposite of what the subconscious mind and its properties signify; so the term “unconscious” really serves as an intrinsically misleading and ultimately unacceptable misnomer, for which “subconscious” remains a more preferable referent.

CHAPTER
5

CHAPTER 5: The Psychology of Hypnosis

Hypnosis Bypasses Critical Thinking

The most notable behavioral change to occur to hypnotized people is their almost complete lack of critical thinking. When hypnotists suggest to hypnotized subjects holding out their arms that they're "getting heavier and heavier" they just go ahead and feel that happening, *without stopping to think* that there's really no reason for their arms to begin to feel that way (after all, it's not like someone just handed them a brick or something else heavy to hold that would justify those sensations happening to them). Or maybe, during a show, the hypnotist will tell the volunteers onstage that "their shoes are ringing and they better take them off to answer them, because someone is trying to call them." They just go ahead and answer their shoes as if it was a normal thing to do, *without stopping to think* that shoes don't ring because they are not phones.

It's the "*without stopping to think"* that happens during both of these examples which indicates how the hypnotized person's critical thinking abilities are, for the moment, *completely* gone. Hypnotists commonly call this "bypassing the critical factor."

The last example shows how demonstrations that showcase this feature can make for great entertainment for the audience watching a hypnotist show. Here's another one…

Male volunteers onstage at a hypnotist show, when told by the hypnotist that they are pregnant, will begin to hold their bellies and act like moaning pregnant women swollen with child ready to give birth. They cannot of course really obey the hypnotist and become pregnant, but they can and will approximate *what they think it's like* to experience pregnancy. The

hypnotized guys do the best they can in their efforts to comply with the hypnotist's suggestions, here again *without stopping to think* (i.e., that it's impossible for males to get pregnant in the first place). When asked by the hypnotist how he got pregnant, one of them might answer “Well, she wasn’t wearing a condom…” or some other such hilarious reply. Why? Because in hypnosis they respond *without stopping to think* what would normally immediately occur to anyone right away: “Hey, women don't wear condoms when they're having sex, only guys do!”

In all of these examples, the hypnotized individuals have no reality check for consistency of the sort that would otherwise cause them to immediately recognize the gross inconsistencies of their particular situations. If they had not been hypnotized, they would all have quickly detected the false presumptions underlying what they were being told, and would have immediately rejected or outright dismissed what they had heard.

When hypnotized people are asked about something impossible the hypnotist has told them, they do not think “is that true?” but “*how* is it true?”

The end result of all of this is that in hypnosis, *anything the hypnotist says is accepted as true,* no matter how ridiculous or obviously impossible his or her suggestions might be. If the hypnotist’s requests are impossible to fulfill, the hypnotized persons will carry them out to the best of their abilities in their efforts to faithfully comply, sometimes in hilarious ways.

Trance Logic

This mode of thinking (or really*, not thinking*) typical of someone in hypnosis is called "trance logic." This same kind of trance logic occurs when we are dreaming. We never stop to think why we are desperately searching for “the file with spaghetti on it” or many of the other scenarios we dream through that make absolutely no sense when we happen to remember them after we wake up. In the same way, critical thinking is totally disabled during sleep such that we simply accept what’s going on without question, no matter how absurd it would be had we been awake.

Words, in trance logic, tend to be interpreted literally; and communication is conveyed by focusing on the words themselves rather than on ideas.

Confabulation

A phenomenon related to trance logic is confabulation. A great example of this is the answer given to the hypnotist by one of the guys he has hypnotized and told they were pregnant, when he asks him how he got that way. In that case, the guy simply made up a story "on the fly" that his girlfriend wasn't wearing a condom when they had sex and that's how he ended up that way.

Such confabulations—which come from hypnotized volunteers onstage when they respond to questions about their impossible situations—can be the funniest things ever, since nobody (not even the hypnotist) knows what they'll say next. Their fantastic made-up answers justifying whatever the hypnotist has defined for them as "real" are often so creative that they almost sound believable due to the sincere manner in which they are often delivered. Other astonishing and surprising aspects of hypnotic confabulations are their sheer spontaneity, and the seeming completeness of narratives that are sometimes so complex and detailed that it almost sounds impossible for them *not* to be real.

But confabulation is not just something people in hypnosis do. Confabulation may occur when people are asked what went on when this or that happened long ago; and their memories of that incident become conflated with the thoughts they would have about it later on. Or it may happen spontaneously, when there are gaps in their memories about certain details as they are recounting a story—gaps they automatically fill in with stuff that sounds plausible enough so as to just get on with whatever story they're trying to tell.

So, people who confabulate are not lying, or telling something they know isn't true; they're just presenting *false memories* about what they know they believe to be true (or "true enough," as the case may be) due to some lapse of memory on their part. This is mostly due to an important feature of the human mind we'll explore in detail in Volume III. *This is an important point…*

Your mind does not really distinguish between memories of something that really happened to you, and those you've vividly imagined about it—both of which get filed away *together* in your mind's "mental file cabinet."

The reason why this characteristic of the human mind will be so important for us later on is that this obvious "bug" in our mental handling of information can be transformed into a "feature" instead, and used for interesting purposes—experiencing spiritual and religious "ascents" to heaven, or the afterlife, or to other supernatural realms that feel absolutely and utterly real (and are remembered that way afterwards).

Hypnosis disables contrastive reasoning

Although I am at risk of being overly simplistic here, it can be said that matching reasoning *sorts for sameness* and is good at matching and identifying shared similarities, whereas contrastive reasoning *sorts for differences and mismatches* . It is this sorting for difference that we usually use to actively identify things that “aren’t right,” at which point they can be further scrutinized or simply rejected as false. Since this no longer happens during hypnosis, nothing is rejected as false—everything the hypnotist says is readily and immediately accepted as true. Notable exceptions to this can happen when the hypnotist asks the hypnotized person to do something perceived as threatening to his or her survival or well-being, at which time they may refuse and even angrily “pop out” of trance to confront the hypnotist concerning his or her seemingly malicious intentions.

On the other hand, we use *matching* reasoning to sort for *sameness*, identifying similarity and matching information—a mental strategy that is available and active even for someone in hypnosis, even as they lose (temporarily) the contrastive reasoning we usually use to identify dissimilarities and reject things that don’t match with what we already know.

As I mentioned, hypnotists have traditionally characterized this loss of contrastive reasoning in their jargon as “bypassing the critical factor.” It’s what happens when hypnosis removes the conscious mind and its

contrastive scrutiny from the equation, such that only the subconscious mind and its matching reasoning remain operational. In the quote below from Robert Collier, we can see how this feature of the conscious and subconscious minds have been incorporated into the traditional "Hypnotist's Model of the Mind."

"You see, where the conscious mind reasons inductively, the subconscious uses only deductive reasoning. Where the reasoning mind weighs each fact that is presented to it, questions the truth or falsity of each, and then forms its conclusions accordingly, the subconscious acts quite differently. IT ACCEPTS AS FACT ANY STATEMENT THAT IS PRESENTED TO IT CONVINCINGLY. Then, having accepted this as the basis of its actions, it proceeds logically to do all in its power to bring it into being."

— Collier, Robert (1947). *Riches Within Your Reach: The Law of the Higher Potential*. Robert Collier Publications. pp.344–345

Trance Logic and Neodissociation Theory

"The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents."

—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu," first line.

Ernest Hilgard (1904-2001), one of the most eminent academic researchers of hypnosis in modern times, had his own theory to account for trance logic. His neodissociation theory of divided consciousness hypothesizes that there is a division of consciousness into at least two simultaneous streams of thought, separated by an amnesic barrier. One can hold two (or more) different or even opposite views on the same subject at the same time, but only one stream of thought may be activated and brought to consciousness at any one time while the others are temporarily suppressed, but still there.

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, novelist

Dissociation, then, is the splitting off of information and ideas such that they can exert their influence independently of one's conscious awareness. Although refined by Ernest Hilgard, this idea originally came from Pierre Janet (1859-1947), who sought a unifying theory of consciousness.

"In a state of trance logic, people can delude themselves about a matter while also knowing the truth about it."

— Schumaker, John F. (1995). *The Corruption of Reality: A Unified Theory of Religion, Hypnosis, and Psychopathology.* Prometheus Books. p.54.

The mind's prime directive is *order* , which requires us to be dissociated from the vast majority of our memories in order to avoid the chaos that would otherwise ensue. Thus, dissociation is the mind's way of avoiding any disturbances that might contribute to diminishing our sense of order; but it also serves to satisfy our powerful need for self-forgetting and reality-forgetting, which it accomplishes by setting up amnesic barriers between streams of thought.

The result is independent states of mind that are both altered and unaltered at the same time, while the dissociated knowledge remains alive and well at the subconscious level.

"…current dissociation theory views the mind as continually aware across the conscious-unconscious barrier, even though we might be consciously *unaware of being aware* at the unconscious level."

— Schumaker, John F. (1995). *The Corruption of Reality: A Unified Theory of Religion, Hypnosis, and Psychopathology.* Prometheus Books. p.46.

Hilgard presents a prime example of this in the form of automatic writing, where in an experiment he hypnotically replicates the phenomenon such that the subject unconsciously performs simple arithmetic tasks with one hand while naming colors from a color chart.[15] This demonstrates that the mind can process information along parallel and independent pathways, one of which lacks any conscious awareness.

In antiquity, as much later in the spiritualist revival of the nineteenth century, such demonstrations were used by mediums to convince others that they could deliver messages from the dead. The messages scribbled down independently by the medium's hand as he or she was having a conversation with clients turned out to be sensible and lucid enough to do the trick; but displays such as this, although appearing to be spectacularly paranormal, were in fact the natural products of the medium's *auto* dissociation abilities.

Hypnosis is our own *culture-specific* kind of dissociative trance; but there are many non-Western cultures that generate their own traditional types, some of which seem to work faster and more efficiently than our own. This disparity between some non-Western and modern approaches is most likely due to traditional elements that are lacking in our own clinical type of framework, and which have the power to greatly enhance and accelerate the production of dissociative trance by adding dancing, singing, and sometimes even psychoactive drugs to the mix. Of course, these additions are inappropriate for clinical hypnosis sessions as they are presently conducted in the modern Western world (though not for *religious* services in the industrialized West that continue to incorporate such elements into the performance of their rituals and worship).

The Hidden Observer—Why People “Pop Out” of Hypnosis

There are times when a hypnotic subject can, if given a suggestion that threatens their well-being or otherwise goes beyond their moral limits, “pop out” of trance in response. When they do, they are usually focused on the hypnotist and shocked or angry that he or she would dare abuse them in this way while they are so vulnerable and entrusting themselves to the hypnotist’s care.

“People in the deepest trance have the capacity to sense imminent danger and return to a reality-based orientation.”

— Schumaker, John F. (1995). *The Corruption of Reality: A Unified Theory of Religion, Hypnosis, and Psychopathology.* Prometheus Books. p.43.

As we have seen, neodissociative mind theory (often called "divided mind theory") posits that certain streams of thought are selectively inhibited by way of amnesic barriers. Which begs the question: who or what decides which streams of thought reach consciousness, and which get inhibited by temporary amnesia so that they remain beyond the reach of conscious apprehension?

Fig. 2 Ernest Hilgard

Ernest Hilgard's answer to this is the "hidden observer," an overarching, all-aware monitor of all these complex simultaneous processes *that always retains a solid foothold in reality* , and is not going to sit idly by when it perceives that the hypnotized person's wellbeing is threatened.

If deemed necessary, the hidden observer can immediately return the person back to *real* reality causing him or her to "pop out of trance" in order to deal with whatever crisis may be at hand awake and aware, with all mental faculties on board. In such cases, the hidden observer functions very much like an emergency failsafe mechanism, ensuring the person's safety and wellbeing at all times no matter how distracted or absorbed in thought he or she might be.

Or perhaps the hidden observer is our modern answer to the belief in "guardian angels" or, before that, the personal protective daemon which was a common idea in antiquity. We will examine later the ancient concept that everyone has one of these daemons, and how they were regarded by ancient philosophers (Socrates in particular).

Lucid Dreams—Where Magic Really Works

It is worth mentioning here a bit about lucid dreaming (the ability to be aware of yourself and your surroundings while dreaming). Hypnosis and lucid dreaming are like opposite sides of the same coin. They are similar in that both usually require training to bring the opposite "mind" (conscious or subconscious) more into play than would ordinarily be the case. In the case

of hypnosis, it is a matter of activating the subconscious mind so that it predominates over, and temporarily replaces, the conscious mind, allowing it to do what it can do. Lucid dreaming is the opposite—activating *the conscious mind* to appear and do what it does even though it is normally completely absent while we're sleeping.

In other words, whereas hypnosis involves the temporary disabling of the contrastive reasoning and sorting-for-difference that are normally active while we are awake, lucid dreaming involves *enabling* contrastive reasoning and sorting-for-difference while we are dreaming, when they are normally totally absent.

The experience of lucid dreaming is the closest we can get to real magic. In a lucid dream, you can just think of someone and turn around, and voila! there they are; and you can have a conversation with them even if they passed away years ago. Although claims by ancient magicians that they could fly through the air (like Simon Magus in the New Testament) could not have been true, the law of gravity does not rule or restrict us from doing so during lucid dreaming. The possibilities for performing feats of magic while lucid dreaming are limited only by one's imagination.

Many people, though not a majority, regularly experience lucid dreams naturally on their own, and with no prior training. According to research, 55% of adults have experienced at least one lucid dream and 23% experience lucid dreams regularly (once per month or more).[16] This must surely have also been the case for the people of antiquity, who treated certain dreams as divine communications which had to be interpreted by experts, and perceived lucid dreaming to be more magical and metaphysical than psychological, as it is regarded nowadays (at least by researchers and the well-educated).

St. Augustine (354-430 CE) recounted a story told by his friend and physician Gennadius—who had expressed doubts concerning the afterlife—about the lucid dreams he experienced: Gennadius encountered a youth (sometimes called "teacher" by him) in his dreams over two successive nights. The first night, the youth took him to a city filled with awe-inspiring heavenly sounds (which might sound very "Lovecraftian" to some modern ears); but right after experiencing that vision, he woke up figuring that he must just have been dreaming.

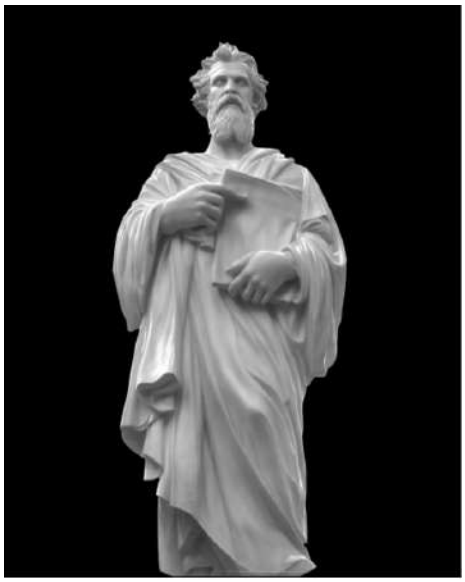

Fig. 3 St. Augustine

On the following night, he again met the same youth in his dream; but this time the youth persuaded him that he was having a lucid dream right then and there. As proof, the young man in his dream pointed out to him where his body was while they were having their conversation together…

"On this the youth inquired whether it was in sleep or when awake that he had seen what he had just narrated [his vision he had just recounted to the youth from the night before]. Gennadius answered: In sleep. The youth then said: You remember it well; it is true that you saw these things in sleep, but I would have you know that even now you are seeing in sleep…"

"Then his teacher [the youth] went on to say: Where is your body now? He answered: In my bed. Do you know, said the youth, that the eyes in this body of yours are now bound and closed, and at rest, and that with these eyes you are seeing nothing?"

—St. Augustine, Letter 159, 4 (415 CE)

The reason that St. Augustine related all of this in his letter in the first place, was to submit Gennadius' lucid dream as proof of the soul's ability to separate from the body. Since the story is "evidence" of this, he suggests that the soul is therefore fully capable of doing the same thing when death comes, making an afterlife possible if not inevitable.

How much more impressive than this, then, must the results have been when lucid dreaming was combined, in ancient times, with other occult and mystical disciplines? For example, some Greeks and Romans used "loci" mnemonic methods in which the student learned to create "Memory Palaces." These were buildings or other architectural locations (real or imagined) that were memorized in such exquisitely fine detail that their rooms became repositories for the memories symbolically placed within them. One who had mastered the art of memory could retrieve tokens representing ideas, objects, or people from the respective rooms in which he or she had mentally placed them; this permitted an instant and exact recall which could retrieve lots and lots of the information accrued over time.

There is much to say about the ancient art of memory that was taught and practiced throughout the Greco-Roman world; but I bring the subject up here only to speculate as to what might have happened when mnemonic systems based on the loci method described above were combined with lucid dreaming. An adept at both lucid dreaming and the practice of loci mnemonics could, in theory, lucidly explore "memory palaces" in his or her dreams to great effect.

Dreams, Psychedelics, Lucid Dreams, and Virtual Reality

If I may make a somewhat off-topic side note here, both dreaming and psychedelics are "autonomous internal presentations"—this may be especially so for DMT-related experiences. And both of these phenomena are accompanied by a distinct sense of a lack of conscious personal control, a fact that makes them entertaining at the very same time. In a way, VR is a technological effort to imitate lucid dreaming (without the hard work and training necessary) within our collective conscious minds and to assert conscious control over the subconsciously generated visual manifestations of dreaming and psychedelics. Transforming these manifestations from

phenomena with a life of their own to something under our own control fulfills our need to eliminate uncertainty, which is one of the conscious mind's primary goals.

For the present, the ability of VR to compete with the utter realness experienced in lucid dreams, and in internal eyes-closed psychedelic displays, is limited only by current technology. In fact, VR offers the first known *controllable* way to experience an externally-induced vivid experience outside of those—none of which require the positing of alternative universes to explain their existence.

The Unique Ability of Hypnosis to Unleash a Person's Present Full Potential

Hypnosis is about "anything that's possible is possible."

In regular waking life, what we think we can and can't do is based on our own (often incorrect) presumptions. The predisposed belief that one can't do this or that most often serves to immediately shut down any possibilities to the contrary, even before any attempt can be made to prove otherwise. This is indeed self-limiting behavior, which automatically places unnecessary and unjustified limits upon what we are capable of doing. For a hypnotherapist, such negative self-beliefs on the part of the subject can get in the way of accomplishing the real work of change that needs to occur.

"Whether you think you can, or think you can't ... you're right."

—Henry Ford

There is an interesting and very useful side-effect of the ability, which we noted above, to disable contrastive thinking and its sorting-for-difference function. The result, an unquestioned acceptance of pretty much anything the hypnotist says next, can be temporarily used to bypass the kind of negative self-fulfilling prophecies that would normally ensure premature failure. This leaves the hypnotic subject free to actually perform up to his or her present and real potential.

“They can because they think they can.”

—Virgil

This explains why people can perform seemingly impossible feats while in hypnosis (and the state of somnambulism in particular). For example, most people would think it impossible to freeze like a statue and hold that same position for hours, if asked to do so. Most might be able to do it for a few minutes or so, but for hours on end? Yet it was not uncommon for old-timey stage hypnotists to do just that with their subjects—displaying them all day like living statues in store windows (what is called hypnotically-induced catalepsy) as a sensational way of promoting the fact that their show was coming to town. Demonstrations of the true potential of what a person really can do, when freed of the normal self-imposed limits we often place on ourselves and our own abilities, can often appear miraculous if not impossible.

To ancient pre-scientific people, such acts were indeed most likely to be perceived as proof of a magician’s amazing “magical powers.” Such at least is one of the consequences of the intersection between hypnosis and ancient magic; yet any hypotheses that included supernatural elements are actually unnecessary, especially when hypnosis can be used to put on full display the most amazing and unbelievable demonstrations of the *full natural and innate potential* of human beings.

Can Anyone Be Hypnotized? Hypnotizability

A 2012 Stanford study found that only 20% of people can’t be hypnotized; but 10% to 15% of people were found to be *highly hypnotizable* .[17] The remainder, up to 65%, lie somewhere along the “can be hypnotized” segment of the hypnotizability spectrum.

One might well imagine that many of those with aphantasia (the inability to visualize in their mind’s eye) would have more problems being hypnotized than others, simply because many hypnotic inductions require the visualization of various experiences. But if subjects with aphantasia (who can still imagine stuff in their own way) are told to “imagine” rather than to visualize, they can often do okay.

So roughly 80% of people (the vast majority) are capable of being hypnotized to some degree; while 10% to 15% of them are highly hypnotizable.

Auto-Hypnosis

It is not necessary for a person to be hypnotized by someone else in order for them to go into somnambulism; once they have been guided by a skilled hypnotist into somnambulism (where all the “magic” happens), the hypnotized subject then theoretically “knows the way.” A hypnotist is in a sense like an elevator operator—he or she is not able to tell the subject exactly how to get into a state of somnambulism, but rather uses clever ways to guide the subject to find his or her *own* way there. The hypnotist can then install hypnotic “triggers” that they can activate at any time in order to *instantly* send the subject into somnambulism, and avoid spending lots of time getting them there again.

Once the efficacy of the trigger is established, after some practice on the part of the hypnotist and the subject, the “button” can then be handed over to the subject him or herself. The subject can now go in and out of somnambulism at will *all by themselves* , at the drop of a hat, by simply switching on the "button" that has been installed and now in his or her complete control.

The ability to go into hypnosis without a hypnotist is called auto-hypnosis. People who have trained themselves and are really, really good at it are called “trance virtuosos.” This is important to note because, as we go forward, we will be encountering instances of people who clearly have all the classic indications of being in somnambulism, but who were apparently not hypnotized by anyone present unless a post-hypnotic suggestion had been installed beforehand, to make it happen instantly and automatically whenever a certain trigger word was repeated.

Somnambulists—Trance Virtuosos and Posthypnotic Suggestions

Before the innovations devised by the great medical hypnotist Dave Elman in the 1940s it took multiple inductions over a series of five sessions or more for hypnotists to gradually deepen a patient's level of trance until they could finally reach the "holy grail" of hypnotism: somnambulism, where whatever the hypnotist says next *automatically becomes the patient's utter reality* as long as they are in trance. With his innovative "Elman Induction," in which his subjects would open and close their eyes three times, Dave Elman enabled hypnotists from then on to bring their subjects into somnambulism *in just one session* .

People whom modern hypnotists have labeled "trance virtuosos" (and whom we will mention often later on in Volumes II and III) are those individuals whom the hypnotist has previously conditioned, using posthypnotic suggestions, to automatically perform a predetermined action or series of actions. These suggestions are most often used to instantly send someone (usually an accomplice) directly into somnambulism (or even deeper) upon hearing a predesignated trigger word. Sometimes non-verbal gestures can be used as triggers instead. In antiquity (as we will see later on), such trance virtuosos were usually the assistants of magicians/hypnotists (often a slave or young boy) and were knowing accessories to the magician's deception. Yet another preprogrammed trigger word (often whispered into the trance virtuoso's ear by the same magician/hypnotist) is usually hypnotically installed to quickly bring the subject back to normal.

Posthypnotic suggestions are used all the time in stage hypnotism shows. Near the end of a show, before emerging the onstage volunteers from trance and sending them back to the audience, the hypnotist will almost always give some of them posthypnotic suggestions before letting them go. For example, the hypnotist may tell one of them that when she hears the word "California," she will immediately jump up on the table in front of her and yell out loud "I need a man!" Then he might tell another volunteer that, after emerging from hypnosis, whenever he hears the word "fun," he will spontaneously run out in front of the audience, put his hand over his heart, and sing the national anthem—but with the wrong words. The hypnotist sets

up a few more stage volunteers with similarly comedic posthypnotic suggestions until he is ready to bring them all back to normal consciousness.

Then, after returning the volunteers from trance and letting them go back to sit with their friends and family in the audience, the hypnotist talks about random stuff while casually interspersing throughout his remarks the various trigger words he previously installed in the volunteers. As he goes through those trigger words, the volunteers who were given posthypnotic suggestions spontaneously perform, one by one, the assigned tasks he told them they would do.

Upon hearing the word "California" the young lady who has been given that trigger word inevitably jumps up on the table she was seated at and yells "I need a man!" after which she instantly snaps out of it wondering why she was standing on the table with everyone laughing at her. The young man, who was given the posthypnotic trigger word "fun," hears the hypnotist say the word while talking to the audience, at which point he runs out to the middle of the room, puts his hand over his heart, and proceeds to loudly sing the national anthem…badly, and wrong. In the meantime, the entire audience (who was in on it) rolls with laughter. After he finishes singing (having fulfilled his posthypnotic suggestion) the guy immediately returns to normal—quite confused as to how he ended up in the middle of the room with the entire audience hysterically laughing at him and whatever he was doing.

On the other hand, the instances of posthypnotic suggestions from the ancient world that we will be examining here were not nearly as comedic or innocuous as these. Rather, they used trigger words to instantly throw a trance virtuoso into a deep trance state capable of accurately feigning death —unresponsive to outside stimuli, impervious to pain, and in a cataleptic state simulating rigor mortis. With yet another trigger word, the trained trance virtuoso would return back to normal, having been miraculously "resurrected from death" by the powerful magician's "divine powers." Needless to say, this was a real show-stopper for any spectators who were watching, all of whom walked away absolutely convinced that they had just witnessed a profound miracle performed right in front of them.

Many centuries later, consulting somnambulists (those who could enter

somnambulism on command) became the rage of the blossoming Spiritualism craze that flourished during the late nineteenth century. Why? Because it was believed by many at the time that somnambulists were somehow privy to the spirit world and to the secret information about the future and other things that could be accessed there (just as the ancient Greeks and Romans had once believed).

Fig. 4 From *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

But whatever credibility hypnosis had gained as a legitimate object of scientific inquiry up to that time was tarnished by its re-adaptation for questionable purposes, as it became confounded with the occult and the paranormal during that spiritual revival. Public opinion now put hypnotism in the same category as séances and Ouija boards (where in many respects it has pretty much languished ever since). In effect, hypnosis had been popularly re-purposed to perform one of its oldest applications—*necromancy.*

It is interesting to note that the very first horror film ever made was a silent movie called *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, about an insane itinerant mesmerist who kept a zombie-like guy in perpetual somnambulism. The coffin he was kept in was carted around town by Dr. Caligari to foretell the future for money. It's still considered today *the* quintessential work of German Expressionist cinema; so, I would recommend it to readers interested in watching a fascinating stereotypical portrayal of such a somnambulist; and if not for that, then for all the visual bizarreness and horror chills this truly great movie has to offer (it's often available to watch online).

We will see again and again in this and the following volumes the role trance virtuosos played in staging public magical spectacles, particularly when it came to performances that featured simulations of “striking someone dead” and their subsequent “resurrection.” Somnambulists who were conditioned, by themselves or others, to spontaneously enter profound trance states at will and on the spot (imagine fainting goats in action) were precisely what a magician in times past needed to put on dazzling public demonstrations of his awesome “powers” over life and death—powers usually reserved for the gods, or by those exceptional men and women who had somehow virtually become gods themselves.

Hypnotists are, by nature, pragmatists; they are mainly only concerned with what works. Their craft and art depend on it. They are also opportunists and utilitarians, using whatever happens to be at hand in order to generate trance. For practiced hypnotists, the number-one priority in conducting hypnosis is expediency, which promotes utilitarianism and even discreet opportunism. This is especially true when it comes to identifying a particular person's "doorway into trance," which the hypnotist must find as it varies wildly from person to person.

As we shall see, some people in ancient times seem to have mastered, and applied publicly with great success, more than a few recognizable hypnotic techniques.

CHAPTER
6

CHAPTER 6: A Million Ways to Hypnotize

There are almost infinite ways to induce hypnosis. The range is vast—from a handshake induction whereby the hypnotist is able to drop someone to the floor with just a word and a handshake (highly illegal if done without consent) to using hypnotic language; or by engaging in monotonous repetition to the point where a subject escapes into trance just to avoid boredom (as some college students tend to do when having to listen to certain professors' lectures). Sometimes just staring at the flame of a candle is enough to do the trick.

Doorways into Trance:

Imposed loss of physical equilibrium:

Falling like "falling asleep" (in instant inductions) or being gently rocked.

Loss of emotional or mental equilibrium:

Anxiety/fear. Someone who's anxious will almost do anything to feel better…including escaping into trance.

Confusion:

Escaping into trance to avoid dissonance. Technique—have them repeat what you say, but go faster and lose them.

Tension/release cycles:

Results in a relaxation response that can transform into hypnosis.

Social pressure:

People want to be accepted and do the right thing. Social pressure to conform can provide an appropriate context where going into trance is the right thing to do.

Profound relaxation (progressive relaxation):

Old-fashioned and painstakingly long method
—relaxing every muscle group all the way down (maybe really a boredom induction).

Boredom:

Daydreaming (alpha state trances) can serve as a way to escape from boredom. Monotonic voices (old timey induction voice tones once thought to be useful) can simply bore people to the point of desperation to where they escape into trance (which is more interesting than what's going on around them). Bored into acquiescence—most people are dying to escape boredom. Boredom into trance is often facilitated by monotony and repetition (especially by means of music).

Shock and awe:

Instant inductions, for example shouting "sleep!" (Scared into acquiescence).

Bringing memories of past trances to life:

"What's it like, do that now, hang onto that good feeling…and segue into trance."

Two Powerful, but Opposite, Doorways into Trance: Sensory Bombardment and Sensory Deprivation

Nearly anyone will eventually go into trance if sensory bombardment is used to overload their normal neurology or, if it is under-stimulated, using techniques for sensory deprivation.

In sensory bombardment, the senses are overloaded with intense repetitive stimulation until a person "escapes" into trance. This is precisely what nightclubs intend when they blast their patrons with super-loud repetitive rhythms, disorienting strobes, and dazzling light shows. Fog machines are sometimes added to the mix to provide an otherworldly ambience, as well as shifting shadows and dark, quieter remote places within the club where customers can escape to find temporary relief from the overwhelming noise and din designed for them.

Fig. 5 Cathedral Interior

However, a raucous nightclub is not the only place you can experience trance-inducing sensory bombardment. On the opposite end of the spectrum, huge cathedrals are especially designed to use sensory bombardment (albeit in more delicate and subtle ways) to induce trance in worshippers. Bright colored beams of light streaming in from ornate stained-glass windows, and huge choirs singing within huge enclosures that echo and reverberate from seemingly everywhere, serve as powerful sources of sensory bombardment suitable for trance induction. All of these combined together provide an environment conducive to transforming the cathedral from an impressive architectural structure into a giant trance-inducing machine that functions as a truly awesome sacred space. Add a guy wearing a dress standing in front of everyone monotonously intoning words in a dead language that nobody understands, and it's pretty much guaranteed that by the time the service ends you'll end up with a room filled with lots of very hypnotized worshippers.

On the other hand, sensory deprivation can also facilitate the process of entering trance. A common mode of initiation in antiquity was to bury an initiate alive in a tomb or coffin in order to experience “death,” and then to release them after a time to be “resurrected” back to life. The sheer isolation they experienced, along with the sort of sensory deprivation that quickly

causes a person’s mind to start hallucinating in the silent blackness, (unsurprisingly) proves to be very effective for inducing trance.

Then there’s hypnotizing by way of fascination—focusing on a candle’s flame or on the iconic hypnotist’s swinging watch, pendulum, or some other shiny object. Monotonous ambient music, relaxation, vivid visual imagery, and primitive drumming at four to six beats per second are some of the many other ways hypnosis can be induced.

Nonverbal inductions using hand passes used to be a very popular way to induce trance and was the method of choice for the early mesmerists. Nowadays, this technique is generally used only by practitioners of so-called "energy work," who believe that there's a kind of positive "energy" emitted from their hands they can then (supposedly) transfer to their patients' bodies by repeatedly passing their hands back and forth over them (what is called "Reiki"). These beliefs are not dissimilar to those held long ago by the old-timey mesmerists, before hypnosis came along and disabused them of their grandiose notions that they were somehow projecting their own personal "power" in order to accomplish what they could do.

If one watches practitioners of "energy healing" who employ hand passes, one cannot help but notice that they almost always rub their hands together very briskly so as to warm them up just before proceeding with the treatment. It's no wonder then that the patient will "feel the energy" radiating from the hands of the practitioner as they pass over them. Our natural sense of heat proximity (being able to feel the warmth emitted from someone else's body when he or she is close by, even without actually being touched), and the occasional shock of static electricity we can sometimes experience when touching the skin of someone else, would have been more than enough "evidence" to convince people as far back as ancient times that such "energies" were real. Of course, if the treatment did turn out to be effective (as is the case with mesmerism) it would really have been due to the hypnotic elements involved, rather than—as proponents of such "energy work" would have you believe—to the invisible and undetectable "subtle energies" mysteriously emitted from someone's hands.

Yet, it was techniques like this that were often used in ancient times in the firm belief that supernatural energies were at work and could be

harnessed for healing purposes—forces that were sometimes thought to derive from the gods themselves. Such beliefs served as plausible explanations for people who were unaware of any natural causes that might account for them. Phenomena like static electricity (which I mentioned above) and magnetism, known back then from certain metal-bearing ores that had been dug up, all encouraged in antiquity a universal belief in the existence and efficacy of mysterious "occult" energies.

It should be emphasized that trance induction methods may often differ according to culture, as with voodoo dancing and shamanistic performances. As in the case of the abovementioned trance-inducing properties inherent in the design of a gothic cathedral, other cultures add their own types of activities (often traditional) to enhance trance: singing, monotonous drumming, and dancing around a flickering bonfire, just to name a few. All of these had no doubt been exploited for the same purpose, since time immemorial, by the peoples of ancient times (and maybe even by our pre-human ancestors who lived in our most distant past).

How Hypnotists Induce Hypnosis

In modern hypnosis, hypnotists have one primary tool—the human voice. Audio-visual effects can be added to facilitate the onset of hypnosis, like the swinging watch, the twirling hypnotic spiral, or other such methods that use "fascination" to assist in trance induction. Some hypnotists add brainwave-entraining audio beats to help subjects enter trance; but in most cases the only thing that is really necessary is the hypnotist's voice itself. Thus, hypnosis is a "hands-free" skillset; and in this respect it is similar to other skills that rely solely on speech (rhetoric, mentalism, evangelism, and psychological counseling, to name just a few).

Over time, hypnotists developed their own “hypnotic language” to reliably guide people into a trance state. The verbal format most often used to instill the process with this hypnotic language is called a hypnotic induction. For newbies and hypnotists with less experience, pre-written scripts for specific kinds of hypnotic inductions are readily available; all they have to do is read them to their subject or subjects (and hopefully not accidentally drop the script on the floor halfway through).

But just as accomplished musicians do not need to have sheet music in front of them in order to play a piece, an experienced hypnotist will intuitively know what to say and how to say it without any script or memorization at all (just as a virtuoso rock or jazz guitarist might improvise a solo on the fly without even having to think about what he's going to play next). And in the same way that an improvising guitarist has a large repertoire of musical phrases and moves that he or she can draw on to spontaneously create an original solo of their own, skilled hypnotists have a repertoire of hypnotic phrases and techniques at their disposal that enable them to immediately ad-lib as needed their induction verbiage.

As we will see later on, ancient practitioners who unknowingly used hypnotism may have been working off pre-written scripts as well—*the ancient texts and written incantations they had in front of them.* And, as with a hypnotic induction, things had to be said in exactly the right way for things to work.

Much of the hypnotic language used nowadays is derived from reverse-engineering the effective but somewhat complex verbiage Milton Erickson used to hypnotize his patients. His enigmatic techniques were developed into what has now become "conversational hypnosis," meaning that no formal induction is performed on the subject, only conversation that uses certain embedded suggestions sufficient to induce them into hypnosis. Richard Bandler and John Grinder were able to analyze and back-engineer Erickson's verbal hypnotic techniques and then systematically classify them so that any hypnotist could then use them—the two volumes they wrote about this are aptly called (for our purposes here) *The Structure of Magic*.

How a hypnotist phrases what he or she says is often crucial to success. In order to give readers who are non-hypnotists a rough idea as to the nature of hypnotic language, here are a few examples:

The hypnotist may tell the subject what he or she wants them to do or feel in ways that assume they are already happening—he or she might say something like "as you continue to relax deeper and deeper with every word I say…." to the person being hypnotized. The latter then processes this as meaning that this is something he or she is already doing, and then mentally catches up to make sure *it is* happening to them congruent with what they have just heard. Using this technique, the hypnotist doesn't really need to

directly tell them what to do; he or she just needs to describe "what's happening to them" so the subjects just assume that they are and automatically shift their behavior to conform to what the hypnotist is saying.

Another longstanding technique is for the hypnotist to be "artfully vague." While talking someone into trance, there is always the risk that the hypnotist might say something that contradicts what the hypnotized person is experiencing (which can "pop" them out of trance—a bad thing). For example, the hypnotist might begin to tell a subject to imagine that he or she is relaxing comfortably at their favorite vacation spot. The person being hypnotized may then imagine finding themselves in a lush forest under a grove of trees. But let's say the hypnotist incorrectly assumes the subject has imagined being at the beach instead; as he or she continues to talk, he or she begins to describe a sunny scene at the beach, which is *not* where the subject imagines they are. But if the hypnotist refrains from specific descriptions and instead remains *artfully vague*, he or she can avoid this pitfall. A bonus of this technique is that the subject can continue to "own" the experience in their own particular way, which tends to make it that much more real for them as well.

As a third and final example, the hypnotist can intersperse "recursive loops" (cyclic repetitions of variations of the same suggestion) throughout the induction. The hypnotist may tell the subject something like "the deeper you go, the better you feel and the better you feel, the deeper you'll go…" In both theory and practice, each of the recursive loops the hypnotist adds to the induction continues to resonate with the subject, as suggestions reinforce each other and build upon one another as new ones are added to the mix, re-reinforcing everything already said. That is one of the reasons why repetition in hypnosis is so important—say something over and over again enough times and some people will believe almost anything.

There are literally hundreds of other techniques which can be used in conjunction with these and with each other; many of which can be found in Bandler and Grinder's two volumes of *The Structure of Magic* which I mentioned earlier.

Modern Suggestions vs. Old-Timey Commands

Modern hypnotists do not "command" their subjects to do this or that while in hypnosis, like some of the old-timey stage hypnotists used to do. Instead, they "give suggestions" for what they want the subject to think or do next. There are probably many reasons for this change in nomenclature, the main one being to "soften" the perceived influence of the hypnotist over the hypnotized subject so that their responses will be portrayed in a more dignified way. Instead of appearing to be a mindless zombie who acts totally at the whim of the hypnotist, the hypnotized person is reframed as more of a volunteer who is choosing to comply; this, in turn, gives them more responsibility for their own actions and responses. The "authoritarian" approach, which was commonly applied, did lasting damage to public perceptions about hypnosis and—along with the public scandals of the late 1800s that concerned abusive hypnotists molesting young women under their care—cast a negative image of hypnotists and hypnotism from which one can say the field has never really fully recovered.

Some old-timey stage hypnotists were often ruthless with their onstage subjects as compared with modern standards. Many of the stunts they routinely performed back then are now considered demeaning and absolutely unacceptable; for example, telling an onstage volunteer deep in hypnosis that his hair is on fire. It looks pretty funny from the audience's point of view, but in the meantime that person actually believes his hair is on fire and reacts with the utter panic and fear one would expect if it were actually happening in real life.

Another common stunt was to hypnotize someone, tell them they are stiff as a board, and suspend them over two chairs *while someone stands on them*. The pitfalls and possible dangers of doing stuff like this are obvious, but this was commonly performed during old-timey hypnosis shows. Today these kinds of acts are frowned upon and rarely performed, if ever. Unlike their predecessors, who could quickly skip to the next town if things went south, modern hypnotists have to worry about liability, lawsuits, and insurance which rules out performing such risky presentations.

The way hypnotists speak to their subjects has also changed dramatically—they used to bark orders at their subjects in very demeaning and intimidating tones of voice. In fact, this was not confined to stage

hypnotists, as even extant voice recordings of Dave Elman (considered the father of hypnotherapy) at work sound overly surly, demanding, and almost abusive to our modern sensibilities. Listening to these recordings, one can only wonder how people could go into hypnosis with him at all, being unpleasantly shouted at in such a manner. But hypnotists have since softened their approach such that most of them ply their craft using gentler and less intimidating tones of voice. Since so much of modern hypnotherapy relies on having the subject relax into trance, barking commands like the old-timey hypnotists used to do is no longer viable or useful.

Compounding: From Multi-Modality Overload to Trance Inevitability

A big part of the hypnotist's strategy is like the old adage "if you throw enough spaghetti against the wall, something's going to stick." What is called hypnotic compounding may be described as a technique to achieve "multi-modality overload" since it combines together as many modes of hypnotic techniques as possible at the same time, one on top of the other, to make going into hypnosis so persuasive that, in the end, the subject really has no other alternative but to go into trance.

Compounding is the layering of as many compelling and inter-reinforcing induction features as possible, so as to cover all the bases and ensure that going into trance is the only possible outcome. Individuals respond differently to different hypnotic tactics; so, to ensure trance induction, artful hypnotists know to pile on as many different inter-reinforcing techniques as possible.

A skillful hypnotist orchestrates his induction like a composer does a symphony. Accelerators, recursive loops, and other suggestions are set and strategically interspersed during a hypnosis session, each one continuing to resonate over time—one after another, on top of each other, and reinforcing each other. The continuous combination and accumulation of suggestive impressions creates a virtually unstoppable, directed momentum in which the hypnotist's words become the person's only compelling reality—installing a sense of true belief that obligates the subconscious mind to

enact and manifest suggestions in reality as best it can.

But compounding is not limited to just layering verbal suggestions. The hypnotist also uses gestures to reinforce what is said, which also contributes to the power of the suggestions given. Any props employed by the hypnotist along the way can also add to the compounding effect, at which point they serve as what hypnotists call *convincers*. In the case of ancient magicians, magic wands and sleight of hand tricks would have served well to simultaneously reinforce whatever verbal suggestions were being used.

CHAPTER
7

CHAPTER 7: Entrainment—Natural Physiological Trance Induction

Shamanism, Caves, and Fire—Prehistoric Trance

Since trance is a universal human behavior, it's safe to assume our prehistoric ancestors experienced it too. Although there are surviving texts from antiquity that give voice to ancient trance experiences, we have only archaeological evidence when it comes to our pre-literate forbears. As difficult as it may sound to glean evidence for trance from archaeology alone, it is interesting to note that according to modern anthropological opinion, *the majority* of cultural artifacts from Upper Paleolithic times that are not stone tools *are indeed trance-related.*

There are several reasons why such an interpretation currently dominates the field of paleoanthropology. First is the fact that trance-related artifacts found within contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes help to inform us as to the likely meanings and applications of similar artifacts found from prehistoric times. Reasonable parallels may be drawn between modern Stone Age cultures and those early prehistorical ones that shared nearly identical life styles.

The meager samples of cultural artifacts we do have, aside from tools, are the result of their particular manner of preservation—the bulk of our evidence comes from caves, which have been isolated from disturbances for millennia (either by chance or by their sheer remoteness). But *people did not live in those caves;* they were special places used for special purposes. Caves continue to be used by hunter-gatherers to this day as sacred spaces for the performance of initiatory and burial rituals; so it turns out that the remains of non-tool artifacts that have survived from prehistoric times *are actually skewed in favor of the objects that are of interest to us.*

It is just such objects that fall into the domain of what is now called "cognitive archaeology," a theoretical perspective that focuses on how

people in ancient societies may have thought based on the symbolic expressions found in their material culture. It remains theoretical because we obviously cannot read the thoughts they were thinking, nor do we have any written documentation of their perspectives as we do in the case of more recent cultures. It instead relies on inferences using approaches from modern anthropology, psychology, and other related disciplines to posit cultural beliefs and ideologies appropriate to the artifacts found.

Fig. 6 Chauvet Cave Paleolithic Animal Drawings

The feelings of awe felt by the modern visitors who come to view the rock art at sites such as Chauvet Cave in southern France could only have been even more spectacular for the late Paleolithic people who made them. The animal images integrated into the stone formations must have seemed to come to life under the flickering firelight. Specific locations inside the caves seem to have been carefully chosen for their peculiar acoustic properties as well. Like an animal that can't recognize its own image in a mirror, people visiting the caves may have interpreted the echoes reflecting from deep within as the voices *of someone else* (such as an ancestral spirit) answering back from within the rock. The echoes of clapping can come roaring back like multiple hoof beats, imitating a herd of stampeding animals like the ones often illustrated on the cave walls. Other strong reverberations can mimic the sound of thunder along with all of its mythical implications.

Of course, the same could be said of Renaissance cathedrals built many centuries later—their purpose being to shock and awe worshippers into a trance state suitable for religious worship. Cavernous echoes, colored lights flooding the space through stained glass windows, and huge choirs singing

heavenly chants that seemingly resonate from everywhere provide an apt modern analog.

Music, which is another universal human phenomenon, must have also enhanced what went on in those caves. It’s known that prehistoric peoples used flutes; and it's very likely they also used drums or other percussive instruments, as tribal people still living in primitive conditions continue to do. You can find out more about the natural trance-generating power of music in the appendices located at the end of this book.

If the rituals performed in such caves were anything like the ones carried out by modern people who are still basically living in the Stone Age, they would have been conducted by a shaman. A shaman is a specialist in inducing and using trance to contact the spirit world for the benefit of the community. The practice of shamanism (a relatively modern term for this spiritual practice) can be found in nearly every part of the world, although the techniques used can vary from place to place and from culture to culture.

It will be useful for us to examine those aspects of shamanism we will encounter later on, when we investigate its persistent influence on ancient civilizations. Figures from ancient Greek myths—such as Hercules, Orpheus, and others—made shamanic journeys to the underworld and back. Egyptian pharaohs, and the Gnostics of late antiquity, made ascents up to the stars (the “empyrean”) in order to return with privileged and secret knowledge. There are hypnotic and other similar techniques capable of accomplishing both of these types of journeys, which we will examine in detail later on.

Fig. 7 Early Man with Fire

A feature found commonly depicted in cave art, and in some small statues, are representations of “theriomorphs”—the technical term for

animal/human hybrids. These may be very ancient precursors of our modern "werewolf" archetype. Some of the figures portrayed in ancient cave art appear to be those of shamans morphing into deer or other animals; and such shapeshifting is commonly found in shamanic practice today.

The animal into which the prehistoric shaman ritually transforms may be the totem animal honored by the tribe, or a particular prey animal the tribe wished to appear in abundance and to hunt. The ability of a predator to "step into the shoes" of its prey in order to anticipate its moves for a successful chase is attributed to what researchers have named "mirror neurons." These brain cells are dedicated to helping predators (including humans) imagine what their prey is feeling and doing, and thus predict its behavior as it flees. Depictions of shamanic metamorphosis into prey animals may well be human predatory mirror neuron behavior taken to its logical extreme.

The earliest examples of sculptured figurines often appear with animal heads—including bears and lions. One cannot help but wonder whether the ancient Egyptian practice of depicting their gods with animal heads hearkens back to this ancient shamanic practice.

It is useful here to reference an interesting story related by author Jeremy Naydler in *Temple of the Cosmos* told by Theodore Roszak in his book *Where the Wasteland Ends*[18]:

An anthropologist with the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913–1918 was able to attend a shamanic séance during which every member of the Copper Eskimo tribe saw the shaman turn into a polar bear during the rites. Afterwards, the native spectators insisted to the anthropologist that they had all seen it really happen and that the shaman's transformation was an "incontestable fact," even though he saw no such thing! His humorously sarcastic reaction was to conclude that since Eskimos were experts on what is and isn't a polar bear, and their empirical consensus was wholly against him, his interpretation of what had really happened (i.e., nothing) must surely be incorrect…

Though it's highly likely, we as yet have no direct evidence that psychedelic and other psychoactive drugs were used during the rites performed inside the prehistoric caves that served as sacred spaces. The

settings provided by caves were certainly conducive to their use; and such drugs were surely available to these ancient peoples.

Drug-induced visual and acoustic hallucinations would have been greatly enhanced by the multi-sensory and other-worldly environment intentionally created there. The role of the shaman as an intermediary, between our world and the spirit world, required him to be able to enter an altered state of some kind. Whether the trance used to accomplish this was drug-induced or not, the hypnotic principles used to achieve such a transition remain the same.

Fire: the psychological effects of flickering flames

Humans have a long relationship with fire, and its mastery is universally regarded as one of the defining differences between humans and all other animals. From Prometheus stealing fire for humankind, to the Vestal Virgins who were charged with keeping the sacred hearth burning throughout Rome's long and storied history, fire has retained its importance as a sacred gift and a uniquely human endowment.

Fig 8. Cave Family Gathering Around a Fire

Besides its countless utilitarian benefits, fire has always had a strong emotional effect on the human psyche. The modern romantic stereotype of comfortably snuggling up with a loved one on a bear skin rug in front of a crackling fireplace hearkens back to its roots in our most distant past. Watching flames flicker can both mellow and excite people, which increases their suggestibility (the ability to accept and act on suggestions made by someone else)—the evidence of this is the millions of candles sold every year to people who already have electric lighting. Some candles are

lit ceremonially to illuminate churches and temples; others are used as a focal point for meditation. Fire in its many forms still remains an indispensable element of worship all around the world.

James Braid, the “father of modern hypnotism,” discovered the power of eye fixation (maintaining a gaze on a single location for a long time) to induce hypnosis after he arrived late for an appointment and discovered his patient sitting in trance, staring at the flickering flame of an oil lamp (what hypnotists call fascination—one of the many “doorways into trance”). He experimented with this, and found he was able to induce trance using a wide variety of illuminating objects including candles held at different distances from the subject’s face, as well as mirrors.

Fire is also a useful way to evoke the “relaxation response,” yet another doorway into trance which is a mirror image of the “fight or flight” reflex that naturally occurs when humans or animals suddenly come face to face with imminent danger. Most or all available hypnotic, as well as meditation and mindfulness recordings, employ this particular method; and it’s commonly used for stress reduction because it decreases one’s level of arousal and lowers heartbeat, blood pressure, muscle tension, and metabolism to bring about a profound sense of safety, well-being, and exquisite comfort.

Researchers have measured an average five-percent decrease in blood pressure among people who watched fire along with sound. Furthermore, the longer they watched the fire, the more relaxed they became. These effects were found to be even more pronounced for those who scored highest for traits such as empathy, altruism, and other prosocial behaviors, which indicates fire's adaptive evolutionary role in instilling increased intimacy and social cohesion.[19]

There is little doubt that fire would have evoked the exact same relaxation response for our Paleolithic ancestors, including those who were practicing rituals within the caves just discussed. Combined with the multi-sensory environment they intentionally created, the ability to induce trance in participants who gathered in caves and other sacred spaces would have been overwhelming.

Trance is also facilitated by the right-left swaying of people dancing to and fro in front of a ceremonial fire, which causes cortical changes. And then there's the stroboscopic effect that occurs at night when darkness is punctuated by light, as bodies rhythmically dance and whirl around a fire. Combined with musical or percussive accompaniment, such effects are used to create alterations in consciousness—all due to some form of entrainment, and fire is just one of the many ways entrainments can be used to naturally induce trance.

Entrainment—Trance Induction in its Most Primitive Form

Entrainment (not to be confused with "entertainment") is the term used to describe a physiologically-induced trance effect—a natural compulsion in which our brainwaves reflexively sync up with whatever rhythms are going on in the environment around us (unconscious foot tapping to music for example). Drumming and dancing have long been familiar ways to entrain participants into a pleasant, shared communal trance experience. The most archaic form of entrainment may have been the cumulative effect produced by thousands and thousands of nights collectively huddled around the captivating flickers of a life-giving open fire.

"What is the reason that some men, if they see others dance, do the like with their hands and feet, or by other gestures of the body?"

—Aristotle, *Of Diverse Matters*

A rarely-noted ancient source of entrainment was the twinkling of stars. Astral worship, which included star-gazing, was premised on the belief that twinkling and blinking starlight was living, breathing proof that the stars themselves were celestial entities and gods in their own right, worthy of praise and profound worship.

Another form of entrainment revealed by research is the perceived affinities between sound and body motion while experiencing music.[20] In some respects, this kind of entrainment is the aural equivalent of "pacing and leading" (matching, syncing with, and then leading someone else's behavior), a common technique used by hypnotists and others to direct trance behavior. People do it automatically every day in real life; for example, on a construction site where a bunch of guys are hammering away framing a house, they pretty quickly synchronize and eventually all hammer together in the same rhythm. It's all subconscious...they do it without thinking about it.

Long-ago armies realized that marching drums could entrain entire armies to march in perfect unison; in fact, this sort of entrainment is such a primitive and innate human behavior that it has been shown that even newborn babies can perceive rhythms.[21] Babies get rhythm before they can even fully understand speech—that’s how hard-wired this phenomenon is.

“No man, however civilized, can listen for very long to African drumming, or Indian chanting, or Welsh hymn-singing, and retain intact his critical and self-conscious personality…If exposed long enough to the tom-toms and the singing, every one of our philosophers would end up capering and howling with the savages.”

—Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun*

No doubt the reader has encountered the idea that brainwave entrainment may be used to induce hypnosis or some other beneficial state. For example, alpha waves with rhythms between eight to twelve beats per second induce a relaxing dreamy feeling; theta waves, with beats between four to eight beats per second, can be used almost by themselves to induce hypnosis, and so on. Because entrainment works so powerfully, some people believe that hypnosis and theta waves are one and the same; but although a theta frequency is a very reliable trigger and indicator of the hypnotic state, it's not the state itself. In any case, brainwave entrainment is effective at altering one’s mental state; and can often induce trance all by itself.

As an illustration of how much entrainment pervades our behavior, research has found that the brainwaves of musicians synchronize while they play together,[22] and that music sung together can modulate the heart rates of choir members.[23] Studies show that even just holding hands can sync brainwaves which are capable of easing pain![24]

But it’s not just sounds that our brain automatically synchronizes with; entrainment can result from anything blinking or flickering at 4 to 12 times per second, which will naturally induce trance after a while if allowed to do so. The association between the frequencies of flickering lights, and the onset of epileptic fits, is so well understood that television programs are sometimes prefaced with warnings that the show should not be viewed by epileptics who may be triggered by flickering or strobing light.

Ptolemy Discovers Visual Entrainment Using Photic Stimulation

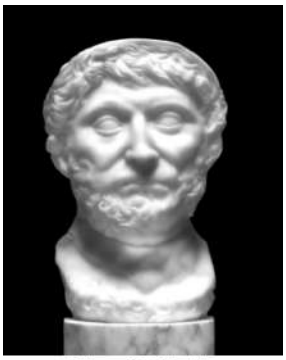

Fig. 9 Ptolemy

The first known observation of, and experimentation with, the effects of flickering lights (what is now called "photic stimulation" entrainment) was done by Ptolemy (Klaudios Ptolemaios) around 200 CE. Ptolemy reported a state of mild euphoria produced by a slow spinning spoked wheel with sunlight flickering through it. Along with the feelings of euphoria, he documents the visual patterns and colors that appeared before his eyes.[25]

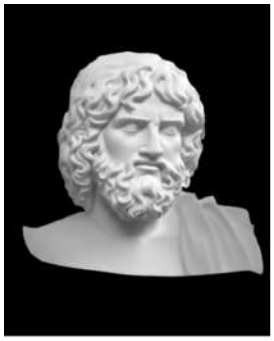

Fig. 10 Apuleius

Apuleius, the famous Latin author of *The Metamorphoses* (a work also popularly known as *The Golden Ass*— the only Latin novel that has survived in its entirety) was accused of using witchcraft to gain the fortunes of a wealthy widow. His successful defense against these charges, or *apologia*, has also survived. One of the things

he was accused of was using incantations to induce an epileptic fit in a slave boy; and his answer to that accusation includes the following:

"Again, the spinning of a potter's wheel will easily infect a man suffering from this disease with its own giddiness. For the sight of its rotations weakens his already feeble mind, and the

potter is far more effective than the magician for casting epileptics into convulsions."

—Apuleius The Defense, Part 45

Here Apuleius confirms for us that in his time, some people were fully aware of the ability of flickering lights to trigger fits in epileptics and induce altered hypnotic-like states.

CHAPTER
8

CHAPTER 8: Exotic Trance States and Levels of Trance Depth

"Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation."

—William James [1902]. *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

Many innovations and new discoveries, about a wide variety of inducible trance states *beyond* hypnosis and somnambulism, have been made since the so-called discovery of hypnosis years ago by Anton Mesmer. These have remained somewhat obscure up until now even among hypnotists, since most of them are rarely encountered by hypnotherapists or used in their ordinary clinical practices; which is why such discoveries are called "exotic trance states."

The existence of these states may explain how hypnosis could have been taking place in antiquity, even though nothing that looks like it to us appears to have gone on during that era. After all, most of those who advocate against this position would argue that the examples that have been put forward as possible or probable instances of ancient hypnosis are not really the kinds of things that can be done by a hypnotist (or at least *what they believe* can be accomplished using hypnotic techniques).

But it turns out that such arguments, made mostly by non-hypnotists, are based primarily on ignorance—ignorance of the actual range of non-ordinary behaviors possible with not just hypnosis, but with other lesser-known trance states as well. And although those who doubt the existence of ancient hypnosis have been unaware of the newly-recognized trance states, it is precisely these states that are capable of eliciting non-ordinary behaviors beyond those ascribed to "popular" classical hypnosis—they have their own peculiar features and methods of induction; and they offer many more possible and even probable explanations than classical hypnosis alone ever could, for some of the phenomena attested to by the ancients.

More importantly, the discovery of these exotic trance states demand (as we will see) that our current definitions for hypnosis be revamped along with the theories and descriptive models used to explain it, as these are based upon older ideas about the discipline. Although the exotic trance states described below have effects that make them similar in many ways to somnambulism, they also have distinctly different features that cannot be found there, which allows for much different results than those that are yielded by using "regular" hypnosis. Identifying these features offers us new and novel possibilities for recognizing analogs that might fit ancient situations and scenarios for which regular hypnosis would be neither appropriate nor effective.

In addition to exotic trance states, there are also advanced and often little-known hypnotic techniques that may well be analogous to what was practiced in antiquity.

We will be looking at these advanced techniques too later on.

Below is a description of the "exotic" trance states we will be referring to as we explore their possible applications in ancient times; but before proceeding, *let's quickly review somnambulism* (the most familiar and commonly-used trance in modern Western hypnotism) so that we will have a baseline of comparison with those exotic trance states we'll be looking at next…

Review: The characteristics of somnambulism

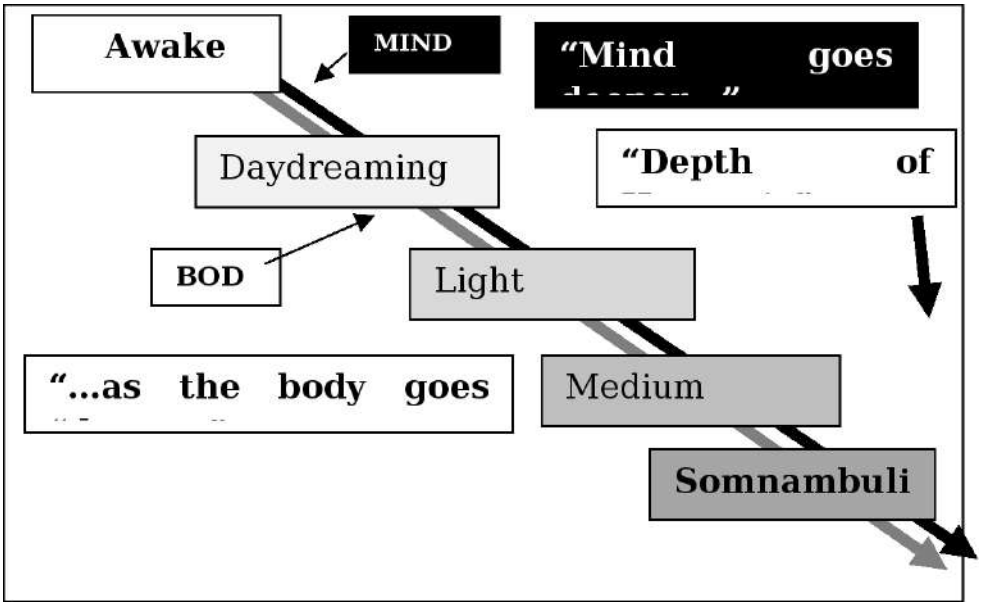

Fig. 11 Somnambulism

In the diagram below, we can see that both the mind (black line) and body (gray line) go deeper and deeper into relaxation until the state of somnambulism is achieved; and there are tests the hypnotist can perform to make sure the subject has in fact reached that state.

This is how hypnotherapists typically get their patients into somnambulism, often by using the "Elman induction" (the "industry standard")—a very rapid, no-nonsense, method of induction that almost always works "right out of the box." Inductions such as this one usually rely on what hypnotists and psychologists call "the relaxation response," during which a subject's muscles relax, the heart rate slows down, breathing becomes deeper, blood pressure drops or stabilizes, and blood flow to the brain increases—all of which together amount to a condition extremely conducive for drifting off into hypnosis. And once they are there, the hypnotist can use techniques to deepen their trance until somnambulism is achieved.

But inductions don't necessarily need to rely on the "relaxation response" to get someone into somnambulism. "Shock inductions" can also accomplish that goal, albeit in ways not as pleasant as inductions that utilize the relaxation response. A prime example of a shock induction is the famous

“handshake induction” (which is perhaps as much a physical assault as it is a hypnotic induction) in which the hypnotist walks up to people, reaches his arm out to shake their hands, and then unexpectedly grabs their extended arms and pulls them towards him, taking them off-balance. At the same time, he yells the command “Sleep!” using a very loud voice. Overwhelmed by the shock of all this happening at once, the subject immediately drops to the ground deep in trance, most often into somnambulism. It’s perhaps a lot like people who faint at the sight of blood—it so terrifies them that when they do happen to see it that they just “check out” as a way to make a temporary psychological escape from the situation. In fact, two of the few fears a baby is born with are of falling and loud noises, both of which are exploited to make this induction work. But it is not recommended that anyone who knows how to perform a handshake induction try it out on random passers-by in the street, as doing so is *highly* illegal and considered to be assault and battery in every state of the Union. So one can only imagine all the hubbub doing this would have generated when it was performed on some ancient street corner.

A somewhat lighter version of this method is used by stage hypnotists. Although an induction that employs the relaxation response works great in a clinical setting, where you just have a patient kicking back in a comfy recliner to work with, stage hypnotism makes for a very different set of circumstances. A stage hypnotist has only 10 to 15 minutes or so to get a whole group of people deep into somnambulism so he can get them to chase their penises around the stage, and talk to famous people by taking off their shoes and using them as phones for the crowd’s entertainment.

Although the hypnotist doesn’t “drop" the onstage volunteers in the same jarring way as one might with a handshake induction, he does have them stand up, close their eyes, and clasp their hands together in front of them harder and harder. As they do so, the almost intolerable buildup of tension they’re experiencing finally finds relief as the hypnotist goes down the line one by one, grabbing each one by their extended hands which he then throws down forcefully towards the floor while shouting “Sleep!” (Sound familiar?) As in the handshake induction, most will immediately drop to the floor in trance, after which the hypnotist gives them suggestions which help them to relax deeper and deeper until they finally enter somnambulism, where all the fun happens. In this case, there’s a “tension/release” thing

going on that works quite well without the progressive relaxation techniques that utilize the relaxation response.

Getting hypnotized subjects to enter a state of somnambulism is so important because that is where all the interesting phenomena unique to hypnosis (listed earlier) are producible. Among them are hallucinations, age regression, selective amnesia, catalepsy, anesthesia, post-hypnotic suggestions, and much more.

Somnambulism is both like, and unlike, the exotic trance states we'll be looking at; but the most important feature it shares with these trance states is this: whatever the hypnotist says next becomes, for all intents and purposes, the subject's new, vivid, and total reality. This is because all of these trance states have in common with somnambulism the bypassing of the critical factor, and the temporary disabling of the mind's contrastive logic that sorts for difference and would normally automatically reject things that are obviously not true. Although these exotic trance states have different inductions from ordinary somnambulism which bring about different results, they have the ability to elicit the same kinds of phenomena as somnambulism due to the fact that whatever the hypnotist tells them next becomes their full-blown reality.

Hyperempiria: trance without relaxation

Fig. 12 Don Gibbons

Hyperempiria is a relatively new kind of hypnosis-like trance which was discovered by chance when in the 1970s college professor Don Gibbons found young women in his classes responding to him sexually in very curious ways during his lectures. Upon further research as to what was happening in his classrooms, he discovered that he was somehow (apparently unconsciously on his part) inducing a kind of trance in his female students that did not really seem to be hypnosis as it was understood back then, when it was believed that only by relaxing the subject's entire body and mind could someone be guided into deep hypnosis. But rather than using mind and body relaxation (the relaxation response) to induce trance, Professor Don Gibbons tried an *exactly opposite* approach that used vivid imagery—with amazing results. He designed inductions to *raise* the body and mind higher and higher into a trance state, yielding different effects than those of "normal" hypnosis; and he named this trance state (and the type of induction that creates it) "hyperempiria."

Hyperempiria is not so much trance without relaxation, as a trance state wherein a person's entire neural system is in a heightened state, rather than suppressed as in regular hypnosis. Stage hypnotists regularly (though unknowingly) take participants from eyes-open, "non-relaxed" somnambulism into hyperempiria while doing X-rated stage shows that culminate in an orgasm-on-command skit wherein all the volunteers on the stage experience wild screaming orgasms in front of the entire audience.

Yes, orgasms on command *is* a real thing and a part of many adult stage-hypnotism shows, often serving as the evening's grand finale. How? Ask someone onstage to humiliate themselves by barking like a dog in front of a crowd and you might encounter some resistance; but telling them to have a wild screaming orgasm? Well…who's going to put up any resistance against that? (Which is why it's actually relatively easy for a hypnotist to regularly pull off this skit onstage.)

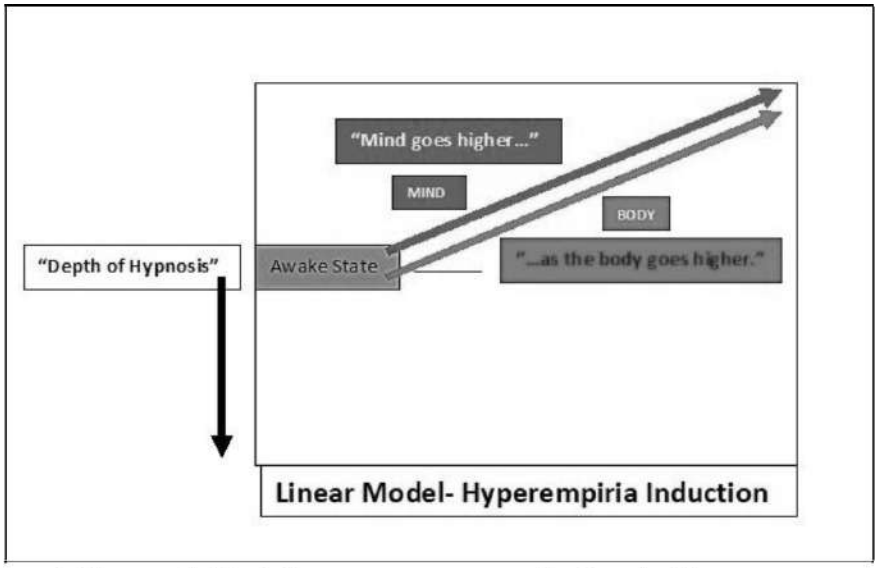

Fig. 13 Hyperempiria Diagram

With their neural system and physical stamina revved up way beyond what one might think possible without the use of powerful stimulants like methamphetamine, subjects in hyperempiria are capable of physical feats unavailable to those in regular hypnosis.

But as we mentioned above in regard to exotic trance states in general, the hyperempiric state has most of the same useful features that can be found in somnambulism—the suppression of contrastive reasoning and sorting-for-difference—such that whatever the hypnotist tells the subject next automatically becomes his or her reality.

Perhaps the main difference between somnambulism and hyperempiria is that hyperempiria offers some additional applications: a hypnotherapy patient slumped lethargically in a La-Z-Boy recliner is not really the ideal candidate for enhancing their physical abilities as a sports player, or optimizing them to increase their sexual stamina and performance. But hyperempiria sure is! Just a light finger sliding along the arm of a subject in

hyperempiria can by itself elicit a cascade of orgasmic responses due to the super-heightened sensitivity experienced in this state. As a result, hyperempiria became the trance state of choice for many athletes and their trainers, enabling them to actively practice and perfect their game and athletic abilities *while "high" in trance.* Once a mastery of inducing hyperempiria is achieved, there's no going back from the incredible results this state makes possible.

On a darker note, a kind of self-induced hyperempiria may have been the mental state behind the behavior of Viking berserkers. Before battle, they induced a state called *Berserkergang* that gave them super strength and made them impervious to pain. Besides hallucinating that they had transformed into bears or wolves for combat, they were able to ignore pain from mortal wounds while fighting furiously to the death with seemingly inexhaustible stamina; hence their state shared many of the features available to someone in a hyperempiric trance (whether enhanced by amanita mushrooms or not).

The Greeks had their own version of *Berserkergang*, which they called *lyssa* ("wolf's rage"). In *Iliad* IX.237-9, Hector's *lyssa* was described as being so indiscriminately violent that he fought "…holding no one in respect, neither man nor gods," as though he were a supernatural being.

Hyperempiria: Possible ancient applications

Among the groups that may have been induced into experiencing something like hyperempiria were the warriors subject to wolf's rage, and the cults whose followers experienced manic, destructive, or even self-destructive revelry—hysterical Dionysian maenads, raving Roman Bacchae, Corybantic dancers, and cultists of the mother goddess Cybele who made public spectacles by whipping themselves into a wild frenzy (which sometimes included self-mutilation), and so on.

Ultra Height: Metaphysical trance state conducive to spiritual and religious experiences

So far, we have examined hypnosis, which involves the "relaxation response"—taking the subject's mind and body down into deep relaxation to induce trance; and hyperempiria, in which the hypnotist induces trance by suggesting the opposite— *raising* the subject's mind and body to heighten his or her neurology and physical abilities, which is more suitable and useful for enhancing physical activities.

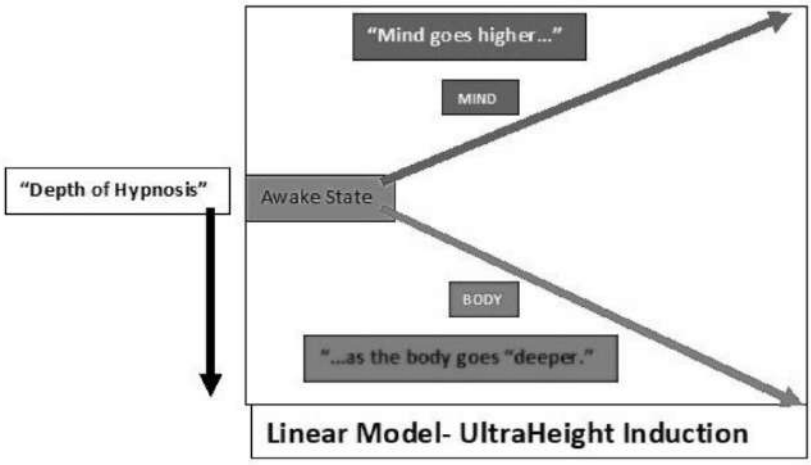

Fig. 14 Ultra Height Diagram

Well, what if instead of either of these one tried an induction that splits the mind and body from each other—lowering the body into deep relaxation like hypnosis, while at the same time *raising* the mind to bring experience to optimal levels in a manner somewhat like hyperempiria? What you then get is "Ultra Height," the name coined by the late Jerry Kein for the trance state he devised and explored that turns out to yield results much different from either hypnosis or hyperempiria.

Hypnotist trainer Jerry Kein, who primarily based his teachings on Dave Elman's works (which were medical and definitely non-metaphysical in

nature) devised Ultra Height in 1993 and trademarked it in 2001. He claimed that Ultra Height allowed the subject to enter a highly “religious” state of mind capable of “connecting with one’s higher self.” He found it conducive to eliciting metaphysical experiences such as contact with one's guardian angel, contacting spirit guides, revealing past lives and so on. None of these experiences pass the Occam’s razor “smell test" for being real rather than self-generated phenomena; but they do tell us that this kind of trance state makes it more likely that a person will undergo them, something that is very relevant to our investigations of ancient hypnosis.

Fig. 15 Jerry Kein

Jerry Kein claims that Ultra Height enables communication with the “super conscious mind;” and he hypothesizes that this "highest part of the mind" exists above and beyond the conscious and subconscious minds. Its description seems to bear some similarity to Hilgard’s “Hidden Observer” (see chapter 5); and in both cases, it seems as though there's some mental function beyond the normal conscious and subconscious minds that is always aware of the contents of both, and maybe even pre-selects which thoughts become conscious and which remain inaccessible to the conscious mind. For Jerry Kein, tapping into this mental function allows the production of those effects unique to Ultra Height. For other hypnosis theorists, the existence of this phenomenon makes "blind therapy" (which will be covered a little further on) possible, as well as the kinds of automatic healing reported for Ultra Depth (discussed next).

Again, as with hyperempiria, most of the useful features found in the

somnambulistic hypnotic state are also fully functional here, making it similar in many respects to those other two trance states. Yet people induced into an Ultra Height trance *do* experience what can only be described as profound metaphysical and religious-like experiences, along with the kinds of euphoria and powerful ecstatic feelings associated with them.

An interesting feature of Ultra Height is that subjects in this state seem very lucid and otherwise talkative compared to the relative terseness of subjects in somnambulism, who often struggle to verbalize while they are in deep and profound relaxation. This somewhat enhances the ability of the hypnotist to communicate with the subject, as well as the subject's ability to express him or herself to the hypnotist.

Ultra Height—Possible ancient applications

Ultra Height clearly offers rich opportunities for identifying instances of its use in the past, especially when it comes to cultic initiations or similar situations designed to evoke religious awe. It is also the kind of trance state that fits best with a near-universal presumption among the ancient cultures we will be examining: the belief that the mind (or soul) was capable of separating from the body—not just at the time of death, but while still alive. According to this widespread belief, such a shift in consciousness allowed an initiate to visit far off places, both terrestrial and celestial, all while his or her body was laying quiet somewhere in deep relaxation. Today we call these out-of-body experiences (OBEs), and there are techniques both hypnotic and psychedelic for inducing them (for example somnambulism along with all the exotic trance states that share its properties, like Ultra Height, ketamine, and DMT).

Needless to say, there are indeed numerous situations in ancient times that might serve as suitable examples of the use of a trance state like Ultra Height. We will be referring back to this state several times, as we proceed to examine instances where its induction seems to be a good fit for the trance that is under discussion (as in the case of a popular Hermetic text from late antiquity called the *Poimandres*, sometimes also called *The divine Pymander*).

Esdaile State: Deep trance for surgical anesthesia

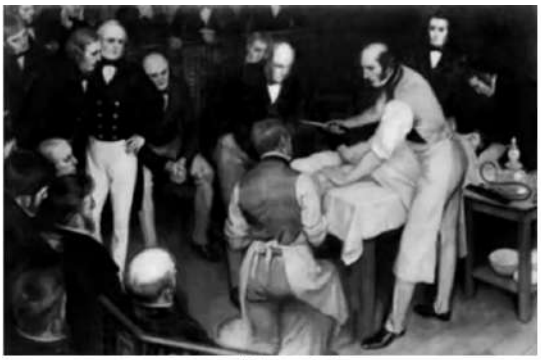

Fig. 16
James Esdaile performing surgery

The Esdaile state is famous for its early use in pain-free surgery. Although it is not technically an exotic trance state as defined here, it deserves to be included and mentioned alongside them in this section because of its distinctive characteristics. The Esdaile state was developed in the 1840s by Scottish doctor James Esdaile while he was working as the chief surgeon of a crowded prison in Calcutta, India. At a time before mesmerism became hypnotism and before anesthetics became available, Esdaile's intention was to reduce surgical pain using mesmerist passes on his patients. It worked, and over six years he performed pain-free major surgery on over 300 cases, including amputations and the removal of cataracts and major tumors. The unanticipated results of his method were nothing less than spectacular: "the extraordinary reduction in the mortality rate of his 'native' surgery patients from 50% to 5%, due to a significant reduction in post-operative shock"[26]

Although the Esdaile state is best known for its use in pain-free surgeries, its most notable feature for our purposes is that while in this state, the subject can take on the appearance of death *without actually being dead*.

For this reason, the Esdaile state has also unfortunately been named "the coma state," even though this type of hypnotic trance is really closer to the opposite of what people commonly think of as a coma state. In the medical coma state, with which people are most familiar, the patient is completely

Fig. 17 Early experiment of trance simulating of death

unconscious; whereas that is not the case at all for people in the Esdaile state (who remain very conscious while in trance). So, to minimize confusion, *we'll just call it the Esdaile state.*

With the possible exception of Ultra Depth (discussed next), the Esdaile state is considered to be the "deepest" level of hypnosis possible. It also has the highest level of suggestibility—the subject's willingness to accept a hypnotist's suggestions.

In the Esdaile trance state, as in the exotic trance states mentioned here, the subject has access to the full array of producible phenomena listed earlier for somnambulism. It also has other characteristics beyond simple somnambulism, as when the subject's condition is able to accurately mimic death and their ability to become completely unresponsive to pain.

It turns out that stage hypnotists encounter the Esdaile state all the time. During a hypnotist stage show, a group of volunteers from the audience are seated in a row of chairs onstage facing the audience. As the show progresses, the stage hypnotist pulls from their chairs those volunteers that are either not responding to his suggestions or don't seem to be hypnotized like the others; and after thanking them for participating, he releases them back into the audience where they continue to watch the show with whomever they came with.

But every once in a while, one of the volunteers onstage becomes totally unresponsive to anything the hypnotist says, remaining slumped in his or her chair unable or unwilling to participate at all with the other volunteers taking part in the show. It's easy to see how this would interfere with the show's progress and quickly become an awkward situation for the hypnotist.

So, what's going on here? Why is that person not cooperating and ignoring everything said by the hypnotist? And if they don't listen to anything the hypnotist tells them, how can they be removed from the stage without physical force of some kind, which in any case would be unacceptable?

The answer is somewhat interesting and says quite a bit about the nature of hypnosis itself. The reason why that particular person became totally unresponsive to the outside world while onstage is because he or she had somehow slipped from somnambulism into an even deeper Esdaile state. While in that state, volunteers feel so exquisitely euphoric in ways that they may never have experienced before that they fear that if they were even to move a muscle, or to do anything at all, their ecstatic state of pleasure would disappear. In other words, they just won't let themselves be bothered by anybody or anything that might interrupt or interfere with how incredibly great they're feeling at that time.

To put an end to this nuisance onstage, the hypnotist uses a very clever but simple technique to rouse subjects out of the Esdaile state and return them to the audience. This technique is known as “the coma threat,” referring to the other name used for the Esdaile state ("coma state"). Knowing why the volunteer is unresponsive—he or she just feels too damn good—the hypnotist approaches the subject and merely whispers into an ear “If you don’t follow my directions from here on, I will make it so you’ll never feel this good ever again.” And then, surprise! They open their eyes and immediately respond to the hypnotist’s requests and leave the stage.

Besides being an interesting way of ending an unwanted Esdaile state onstage during a show, it serves nicely to highlight the degree of sheer ecstasy and total bliss felt by those who experience it.

Some of the outward signs that someone is in the Esdaile state are:

1. Heavy eyelids and pupil dilation.
2. Pulse slows down.
3. Changes in breathing patterns.
4. Smoothening of the facial muscles.
5. Complete immobilization.
6. Catalepsy (subjects freeze in any position they are placed in and stay there, without limb rigidity).
7. Can hear and accept mental suggestions, but are unable to move to perform any kind of physical suggestions.
8. A waxen pallor paler than the subject’s usual complexion.
9. Complete anesthesia without any suggestions for it to happen (it just comes with the state).

It has been suggested that the story found in Plato’s Symposium about Socrates standing perfectly still for hours on end while seemingly deep in thought during the Battle of Potidaea was a symptom of some kind of self-induced catalepsy —behavior typically produced by someone in a hypnotic Esdaile state.

Esdaile State—Deathlike Trance with Total Anesthesia

In the Esdaile state, a subject's heartbeat and breathing can become so faint as to escape even a doctor's notice. Combined with total imperviousness to inflicted pain, absolute unresponsiveness to any outside stimuli, and a catatonic immobilization that can easily be mistaken for rigor mortis (the third stage of death), it's a sure recipe for fooling others into thinking that a live person is dead. If a posthypnotic suggestion is installed beforehand by the hypnotist (a trigger word that will cause the subject to immediately emerge from the Esdaile state and return to his or her normal waking self), *you've got all you need to perform a convincing "resurrection"!*

Ultra Depth (Sichort State): Another Deathlike Trance

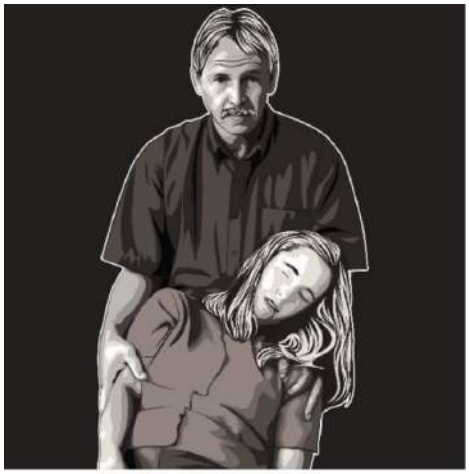

Fig. 18 James Ramey

Somnambulism, hyperempiria, Ultra Height, and even the Esdaile state are all trance states wherein the subject is able to listen to what is said to them. This is not so when it comes to the state of Ultra Depth. The goal of Ultra Depth is to gradually program subjects to go deeper and deeper—way past somnambulism, even past the very deep Esdaile state—to a point where the hypnotist just "launches them off" into an extreme experience of trance with its own unique properties and applications.

Ultra Depth was originally discovered by Walter Sichort, hence its

alternate name “Sichort State.” After Sichort’s death, his work was carried on by his successor, the late James Ramey. Ramey[27] renamed the state Ultra Depth, and trade-marked the name (supposedly for training purposes).

A prominent feature of Ultra Depth is that when subjects are finally “launched" off on their own, they become completely self-referential, ignoring anything that is happening outside in the real world around them, going so deep into trance that communication between them and the hypnotist becomes impossible. So deep, in fact, that it is often difficult to rouse the subject to return back to normal waking consciousness. Sometimes all the hypnotist can do then is wait until the subject decides to emerge from trance on his or her own. When the Ultra Depth subject is good and ready, he or she will emerge from it at a time of his or her choosing, which may take minutes, hours, *or even days*.

To bring the subject into the extremely deep trance of Ultra Depth the hypnotist, over time, guides the subject into deeper and deeper stages of hypnosis. During successive visits—each one taking the subject deeper than the last—the hypnotist gives him or her a trigger word which will, on the following visit, allow the subject to instantly reach whatever depth they had experienced the previous time when it is heard or repeated. Ramey calls this process "staging." After the hypnotist has staged the subject with word shortcuts that trigger deeper and deeper trance levels, he or she is finally given the last trigger word that will automatically and instantly take him or her into this deepest trance state.

Indications of Ultra Depth include muscle flaccidity, rapid eye movements (REM), and no recall of the entire experience on the part of the subject. Additionally, there are claims that by using Ultra Depth the body is able to heal "6 to 10 times faster" than normal. According to James Ramey, this was verified by two Philadelphia doctors—Dolman and Markow, but as no such documented academic studies under these names can be found, this claim may well be anecdotal in nature.

James Ramey believed that the greater the degree of amnesia that could be generated in Ultra Depth, the more it could achieve a state of anesthesia. He asserted that one of the benefits of this state was that, like the Esdaile state, it was suitable for use in surgeries in place of other anesthetics.

Practitioners of Ultra Depth claim that, like Ultra Height, it can produce amazing metaphysical phenomena aside from rapid healing. However, it seems its effects have not yet been scientifically verified by the research that would be necessary to back up such claims. And yet there is no denying that those who have been in Ultra Depth have experienced unexplainable phenomena upon emerging from trance. Its most interesting feature for our purposes here, is that a subject can remain in Ultra Depth trance for longer periods of time than in other trance states, *even for days!*

Fig. 19 Store window trance hypnotist promotion

As a promotion, old-timey hypnotists used to come into town, put a young guy or pretty local young lady into somnambulism, and then prop up the limp body in a department store window for all to marvel at for several days prior to their local scheduled performance. Then, when the show was ready to begin, the hypnotist would hire an ambulance to come and take them to the show where he would finally remove them from trance in front of the audience. So, if it's possible to keep someone in trance for days at a time just by using somnambulism, then how much more easily — and for how much longer — could that be made to happen using the much, much deeper trance level achieved using Ultra Depth?

As with Ultra Height, the ability to produce metaphysical phenomena (none of which pass our Occam's razor "smell test") is also attributed to people who experience Ultra Depth. James Ramey claimed that Ultra Depth is the exact same state that Edgar Cayce ("America's Sleeping Prophet") entered when he did his medical readings, which had supposedly "helped so many people where the medical profession had failed."

Ramey also developed what he called "the Zed state," which he enabled his subjects to achieve using the Ultra Depth process. He claimed that

subjects entering the Zed state can, with eyes open, be temporarily possessed by the personalities of their past lives and can speak in whatever languages they had used when they were alive. He further claimed that a subject in the Zed state can see with the subject's eyes, and can communicate with the hypnotist who "appears as a form of light" to the reincarnated personality.

Of course, the approach we are taking in this book rejects the idea of past lives being revealed during trance; and the reason for this is simple — hallucinations, false memories, and confabulation are all producible under hypnosis, which makes "past lives" all too easy to manufacture. As soon as James Ramey asked subjects in hypnosis if they had access to any of the personalities from their past lives, they spontaneously confabulated some in vivid detail, which (as previously noted) can often be the case. As nice and as compassionate a guy as James Ramey was, he turns out to have been one of the hypnotists I talked about at the beginning of this book who had unfortunately failed to separate the hypnotism they do from their own personal metaphysical and religious beliefs.

Ultra Depth—Possible ancient applications

Although the production of "real" metaphysical phenomena by means of hypnosis is rejected here, we cannot deny the fact that this is what people in Ultra Depth *claim to perceive they are experiencing*. It's the fact that Ultra Depth can prompt such perceptions, along with the sometimes-long periods of time that someone can be maintained in that state, which makes it a prime candidate for a kind of trance that might well have been used in ancient times for religious and mystical rituals.

The types of phenomena that can be produced using Ultra Depth, and their characteristics, make it an especially good parallel of the techniques that may have been used to generate the kinds of deep trances used to initiate pharaohs, as implied by some of the utterances found in the Pyramid Texts. Additionally, the "Temple Sleep" (sometimes called "Solomonic Sleep") described in the Old Testament, as well as descriptions of the state of Lazarus prior to his "resurrection" by Jesus, may likely be instances of induced deep trance similar to Ultra Depth. However, these instances will

be examined later in detail in Volume III.

It is worth pointing out that the idea of using staged trigger words as automatic shortcuts to instantly access profound trance states *is suspiciously similar to the secret passwords routinely given to initiates upon successful completion of their initiations.* There were passwords for different grades of initiation which may have served the same purpose to some degree, maybe functioning as more than just a way for fellow initiates to secretly identify each other.

Ultra Height and Ultra Depth: "Blind Therapy"

One of the more important presumptions on the part of hypnotists who work with Ultra Height and Ultra Depth, is the theory of what has become known as "blind therapy." When the hypnotist is "working blind," he or she doesn't know (and doesn't need to know) the details or the causes of the subject's problem. She or he might not even know what the real problem is at all—and yet the therapy still works.

Blind therapy assumes that the client's all-knowing subconscious mind already:

1. Knows what started the problem, what it is, and when it started
2. Knows what's keeping it going and what's maintaining the problem; and, most importantly…
3. Knows exactly what it takes to change it, turn it off, or transform it into something positive.

Ultra Height and Ultra Depth hypnotists who hold these presumptions believe that it is not necessary for him or her to know anything much about the underlying problems behind the patient's complaints—in fact, they would posit that *the less they know about them, the better the process works* (since they aspire to get out of the way so as not to interfere with the subconscious mind's own agenda for healing the patient).

According to the tenets of blind therapy, the subconscious mind is generally amenable, if not eager, to make beneficial changes on one's behalf

—automatically, perfectly, and permanently. But otherwise, the mind never stops to think about the programs it's running and whether they are still beneficial and useful; so, for that to happen, the hypnotist must create a “pattern interrupt” so that the mind will temporarily stop what it's doing and take the time, then and there, to examine itself and the programs it is running on behalf of the patient. In the case of these exotic trance states, having the mind do this is as simple as the hypnotist setting the intention for the session and just asking the subconscious mind to go ahead and fix whatever problems are vexing the patient—it says "okay, I can do that!" and just does it (or at least that’s the desired result when using blind therapy).

According to Ultra Height and Ultra Depth hypnotists, blind therapy is both exquisitely simple and highly effective; but as with the other exotic trance states, scientific verification for the claims made about it appear to be entirely lacking (which exposes the ongoing disconnect between hypnotism on the one hand, and academic and medical research institutions on the other). Yet, at least anecdotally and according to the hypnotists involved, consistent and observable results are obtained by using blind therapy in conjunction with both of these exotic trance states—super rapid healings, and instant relief from chronic mental and physical conditions, to name a few.

The hypnotist remains relatively “blind” to the processes happening and never even needs to know the details of the patient’s real "problems," much less how to fix them (sounds like the perfect gig for lazy hypnotists, doesn’t it?). But, in the case of Ultra Depth practitioners, the hypnotist had better pack a lunch—because there’s no telling how long they may have to wait before the patient is good and ready to bring him or herself back to normal waking consciousness.

Depth/Levels of trance

Levels of trance

In order to examine ancient applications of what we now call hypnosis, it is first necessary to examine the range of trance phenomena recognized today, which is vast. To do so, we must first examine the established classical “linear model” of trance, an older “traditional” model that needs to

be rejected in light of these other new inducible trance states.

As it stands now, the linear metaphor used for describing “depth of trance” for various hypnotic states is based on gravity—sit up, lie down, go deeper, come back “up” to the waking state, and so on. Although it’s an expedient and easy way to get things done when orienting a hypnotic subject and working with trance states, it’s really not the best or most exact metaphor to use when differentiating the processes that underlie various trance phenomena.

“Depth” of trance

Like the Ptolemaic model of the solar system, the linear “depth” model works *somewhat well* to describe the dynamics of trance and hypnosis; but it appears that this model cannot accommodate the existence of these new trance states and their implications.

First, it is evident that “depth” is really just a subjective anthropocentric metaphor, which is used more or less like “up” and “down”. We can tell as much from a simple thought experiment, such as: “If humans existed in a gravity-free environment and went into trance, what would it mean for them to 'go deeper' into trance?” The obvious answer is that “depth” would be meaningless, just as “up” and “down” would be; and “depth of trance” is clearly a human construct, since trance is not subject to the law of gravity in any way. Similarly, Mesmer introduced the magnet (a kind of portable gravity) as the primary metaphor of choice until magnetism (he called it “animal magnetism”) was eventually discredited as the cause for hypnotic trance. For now, it should just be remembered that “depth of trance” is an expedient metaphor, not reality.

We often say that someone “fell deeply in love” or “emerged from his deep depression.” Up/down, falling/rising, deep/shallow—these are all extremely common *gravity-oriented* metaphors we use all the time; but “deep” and “depth” also have strong connotations of water, and the experience of being in water—submergence and emergence.

One who dives into water falls into another realm beyond his or her usual habitat and safety zone—it’s a nice place to visit, but you wouldn’t want to live there (you couldn’t anyway, you don’t have gills). Perhaps trance is that way too (psychedelics are for sure).

We all know the feeling of falling, which adds a poignant kinesthetic element to up/down gravity metaphors. “Falling” does have its share of negative connotations—it's usually bad, and “down” is at best a risky orientation. People sink and drown, fall ill, go deep into debt, and fall into poverty—metaphors that subtly burden the whole idea of a deep trance with unnecessary, though perhaps unintended, negative connotations.

Such metaphors of rising and falling are commonly used to express polarities, and the transitions between them. In the case of consciousness, we talk about “falling” from “normal” awareness into trance, unconsciousness, or some other “non-normal” mental disequilibrium. On the other hand, we talk about "rising up" in the other direction—“bringing up” or “rousing” someone back up into consciousness, and returning to equilibrium.

People emerge from hypnosis; they do not wake up (as they were never asleep); but hypnotists have been well-served now for hundreds of years by the metaphors of “falling asleep” and “waking up.” Why? Because even though people don’t exactly know what to do when a hypnotist tells them to “go into trance,” *they do understand* what “go to sleep” means. So even though hypnotists know that hypnosis is not the same thing as sleep, for utilitarian reasons it’s expedient for them to use the familiar metaphor of “sleep now;” and people seem ready to respond in ways that are amenable to trance induction. Hypnotists also know that one does not “awaken” from trance; yet that too is often the preferred terminology used with hypnotic subjects for the sake of expediency and easy compliance.

The depth-of-trance model presupposes that trance occurs on a line somewhere between the polarities of “normal” conscious wakefulness and sleep. Trance states are said to “deepen” as they approach sleep, and considered “lighter” as they approach wakefulness. Trance “deepens” in gradations from wakefulness at the top end, down to daydreaming, then past “light” and “medium” trance states all the way down to somnambulism (deep trance or hypnosis). But there are other trance states even deeper than somnambulism—continue even deeper, and one enters the Esdaile state, and from there reaches the very bottom ending in sleep. There are as many ways to describe the linear levels of trance as there are PhD dissertations written about them (since there are always new opportunities to discern even more

levels of trance to define and write about); however, basically, the model consists of the stages I just mentioned.

But there is more to distinguishing one trance state from another than its relative position between being asleep and being awake. There are also differences in orientation—whether the subject is able to pay attention to what's happening outside them (including communications or suggestions from a hypnotist); or whether they become primarily self-oriented and pretty much oblivious to their surroundings, as we are when we're sleeping.

A brief look at the different "levels" of trance located along this line will help the reader understand later on why this model is ultimately insufficient. So why explain it at all if it's obsolete anyway? Because it is the dominant and accepted theoretical model which hypnotists have taught and used for hundreds of years.

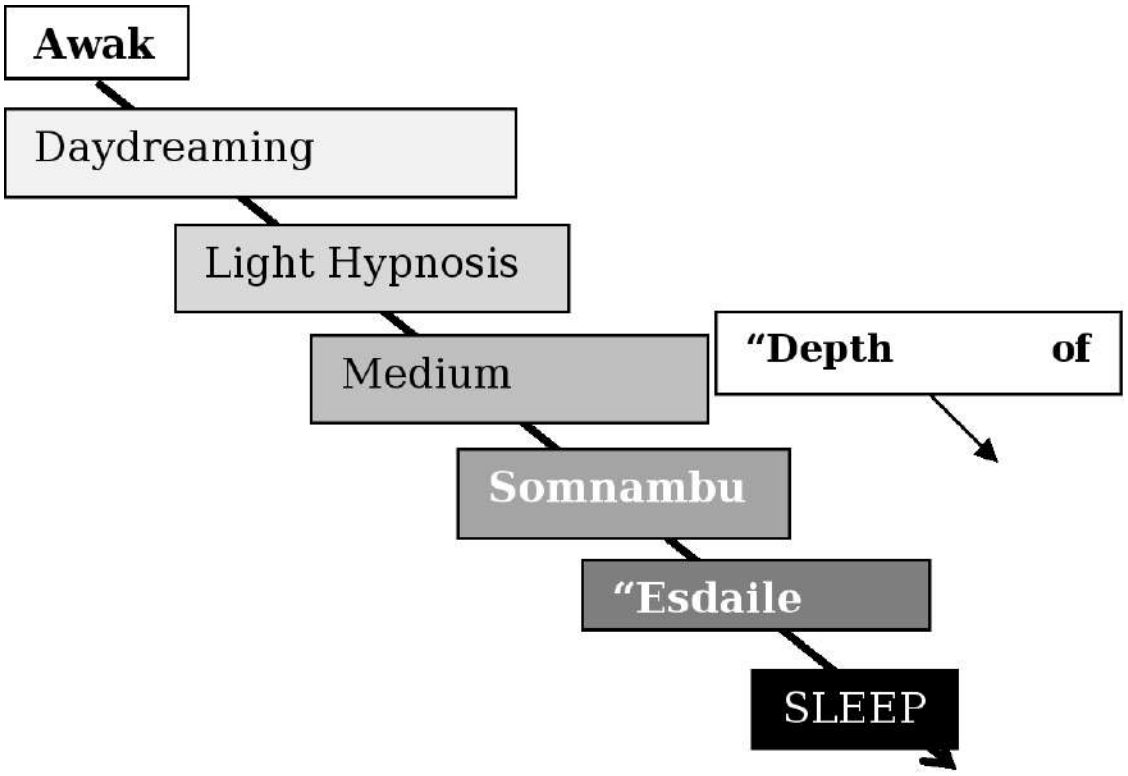

Fig. 20 Linear Model of

1) "Normal" awake state

Starting from the top, the salient characteristic of our “normal” awake state is inner speech activity: from the time we wake to the time we fall asleep, we carry on an incessant sub-vocal conversation with ourselves; this is the “talking” conscious mind’s active mode, and our default state when awake and alert.

2) Hypnoidal State

Just “below” the normal waking state is the hypnoidal state. It’s still a waking state, and we are fully conscious but feel very relaxed as we begin to lose our focus on our surroundings. We commonly experience this state when we’re daydreaming and during “highway hypnosis”—like when you’re driving, and you find that you've missed your freeway off ramp because you were so absorbed in thought that you were no longer paying close attention to what you were doing. Other characteristics of this state are extreme relaxation, closing of the eyes, and getting lost in thought (or in a good book or movie).

3) Light trance

Going deeper still from the hypnoidal state, one begins to enter light trance/light hypnosis which brings with it a set of new phenomena. Characteristic of this state is the ability to induce eye and limb catalepsy (muscle lock). Eye catalepsy can be achieved at this level when the subject is given the suggestion that his or her eyes are so heavy, and the muscles around them so relaxed, that they just won’t open; and the subject discovers that this is in fact the case. This is the first indication that the subject’s subconscious mind is beginning to act on its own, beyond the confines of normal conscious control. Hypnotic subjects at this level often experience their bodies as extremely heavy, or maybe as extremely light and seeming to float.

4) Medium trance

One of the indications of medium trance is aphasia (the ability to block someone from saying their name or address, for example). Subjects told that they cannot remember their names find that the more they try to do so, the more it eludes them. The subject is more relaxed than before and can experience amnesia (blocked memory); analgesia (muted perception of pain), time distortion (lack of awareness of time passed); automatic writing (wherein the subject is conscious but unaware of what he or she is writing);

olfactory and gustatory hallucinations (smelling or tasting whatever is described to them); hypermnesia (ability to vividly remember something they hadn't realized they could); ideomotor behavior (just thinking about doing something with the body makes it happen); and ideo-sensory behavior (just thinking about a feeling produces it in the body), among others.

5) Somnambulism

Even more relaxed, the hypnotic subject can enter *artificial* somnambulism (artificial, since it was originally thought to be virtually the same state as sleepwalking, the medical term for which is "somnambulism"). This is where subjects can experience positive hallucinations (things that aren't really there) and negative hallucinations (things that are really there become temporarily invisible or indetectable for the subject). Somnambulism is the ideal "depth of trance" for both stage hypnotists and hypnotherapists. This is where proponents of the linear model claim the subject's "critical factor" (about which more will be said later) is bypassed, with the resulting behavior being that whatever the hypnotist suggests next instantly becomes the subject's (new) reality.

Somnambulism is where the real magic happens…

Whatever somnambulists (people in somnambulism) are told to do, and can do in actual reality, they can and will do in hypnosis. *This includes doing things they previously thought were impossible for them.*

Moreover, it turns out that people in somnambulism can even do, not just things that they thought beyond possible for themselves, *but beyond what is generally considered humanly possible.* This observation was made early on by hypnotists, some of whom naturally, though mistakenly, assumed that the range of possible elicited hypnotic effects included access to the spirit world, telepathy, and other supernatural phenomena. The options available to the ancients for explaining what was "beyond humanly possible" would have been few and fixed—divine intervention or spirit possession. Magical, divine, or demonic powers were among the explanations of choice (if not the only ones available) available to people in those times; though there are indications that they had their skeptics even back then. The earliest performing mesmerists and hypnotists, and their audiences alike, were astonished by the kinds of phenomena they discovered they could produce

on a regular basis (See Chapter 2 for a list of amazing producible phenomena).

6) Esdaile state

The state just described along with the exotic trance states; although it is not itself an exotic trance state, because of its profound nature it deserves a place on our list of exotic trance states.

The existence of exotic trance states requires a new model other than that of the traditional linear one used up to now…

Hypnosis was once defined as the induction of somnambulism to elicit certain behaviors uniquely attributed to that state alone; but the subsequent identification of distinct trance states, which exhibit much of the same phenomena once relegated to somnambulism alone, requires that we change the way we categorize and conceive of hypnosis, and of trance states in general. We also need to develop an entirely new terminology to accommodate the expanded paradigm brought to light by the discovery of these new "exotic" trance states, in order to keep up with the changes this discovery makes in the way we think about trance and hypnosis.

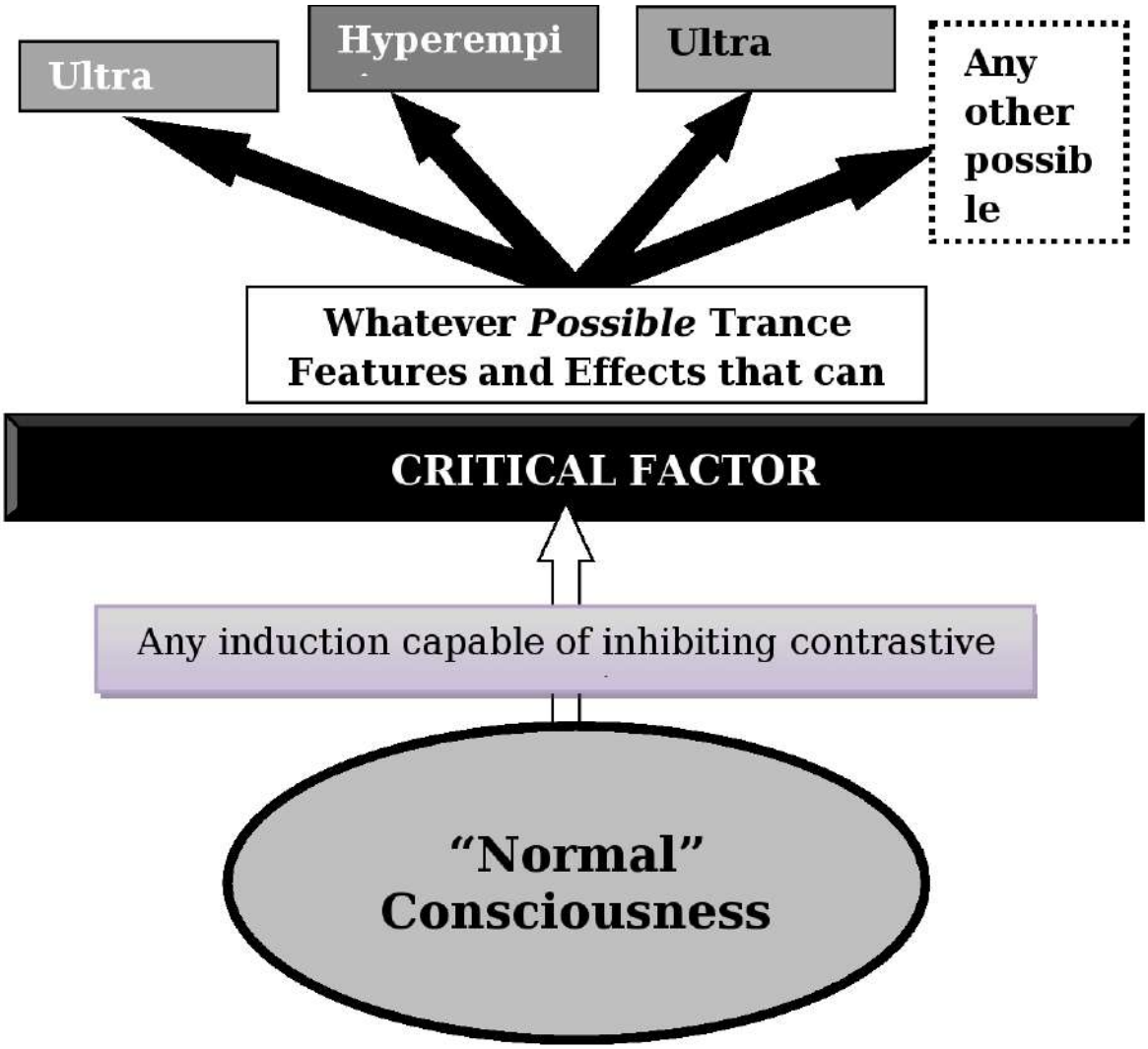

Fig. 21 Non-Linear Trance Model

Above is a diagram suggesting a new, non-linear model that describes the progression of trance in a way that accommodates both somnambulism and the exotic trance states.

The factor common to all of these trance states is the disabling of contrastive reasoning (which removes any objections on the part of the subject to suggestions given by the hypnotist). As with somnambulism, this allows whatever the hypnotist says next to become the subject's vivid reality (the exception being Ultra Depth, wherein the subject becomes entirely self-oriented and feels so euphoric that he or she ceases to listen to,

or care about, anything the hypnotist says). Once the contrastive "sorting for difference" is disabled, anything the subject is *really* capable of doing becomes possible—*including shifting to whatever trance state is described by the hypnotist next.*

A new non-linear trance model

As depicted in the diagram, all such trance states (and any others capable of description by the hypnotist) can be derived from bypassing the mind's critical factor. Once that happens, both in theory and in practice, *a hypnotist can suggest that the subject enter any one of these trance states from any of the others that likewise bypass the critical factor.*

Beyond the various permutations described above, there are other trance states as well that can be achieved—mind and body "down," mind and body "higher," body "down" while mind goes "higher up." Yet these seem to be just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the types of different trance states that can be generated once contrastive sorting-for-difference has been disabled; which in turn opens up almost infinite possibilities for further research and exploration. This is relevant to our current investigation because *the kinds of trance states devised and described to the subject in ancient times may very well have exceeded in number the exotic trance states listed here.*

CHAPTER
9

CHAPTER 9: Advanced Hypnotic Techniques

In addition to the exotic trance states beyond somnambulism described in the previous chapter, there is an entirely different set of novel hypnotic techniques that are capable of achieving unique and interesting results while the subject is in somnambulism. We will be referring to these as well as we continue our inquiry.

Some of these advanced techniques may well be analogs of what was practiced in antiquity. Even if ancient methods differed significantly from our own, these modern techniques can provide us with new explanations that can be used to analyze occurrences of what look like hypnotism in ancient texts, but instances for which regular hypnosis does not seem like a good fit. So such instances offer us even more opportunities for finding, in ancient accounts, mechanisms that look like they might plausibly involve trance or hypnosis.

HypnoSleep

HypnoSleep is the technique of bringing a subject "up" from sleep into somnambulism, giving them suggestions, and then releasing them directly back to sleep—all without ever awakening them. Because no induction is needed, HypnoSleep is easy for beginners to do. With only a few suggestions, they can start doing cool stuff right away, before even learning any inductions or how to take someone into somnambulism from the waking state.

HypnoSleep is also an especially powerful and effective form of hypnotism. It's particularly good at bypassing conscious resistance and skepticism because in sleep, critical thinking is already dormant. That

makes HypnoSleep very useful for implanting hypnotic suggestions while giving the subject absolutely no opportunity to oppose them (which is useful for intransigent hypnotic subjects who desire change, but have difficulties accepting the positive suggestions given to them in normal ways). It's also great for covertly hypnotizing children, spouses, or lovers to do or feel this or that; though the obvious potential for abuse, and the possibilities of using it for unethical and mischievous reasons, make its practice problematic. The controversy surrounding HypnoSleep has prompted some to oppose the practice of hypnosis altogether, with calls for legislation (which have thus far been unsuccessful) to declare the entire practice of hypnosis illegal.

I'll be describing the details of this easy but powerful technique in a later chapter about Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing, where we'll compare the steps of this modern method with descriptions of what went on in his "sleep temples" that became extremely popular in the Greco-Roman world. It is powerful enough to produce the healings described; and it is by far the best modern fit for ancient descriptions of the "dream therapy" purportedly practiced there, as you will see.

Parts Therapy

Fig. 22 Roy Hunter

Though in ancient times some people were thought to have been possessed by some outside entity, in modern cultures they are given a psychological diagnosis of multiple personality disorder (MPD)[28]. The daunting challenge for the therapist treating such a person is somehow to reintegrate all of their other personalities back into a primary single one like

most people have; and unlike many other debilitating psychological diseases, there are no medications or pills available to manage a patient with this kind of complex condition.

This is what makes parts therapy so interesting, since this technique involves creating (that's right—*creating*) multiple personalities for the subject while he or she is deep in hypnosis. After calling out and naming "on the fly" different personalities that relate to the issue at hand (pro and con), the hypnotist forms them all into a kind of committee where the different personalities created (each with its own and often opposite viewpoint from the others) argue out the issues at hand, all coming from one single person (the hypnotic subject). Eventually, they are all requested by the hypnotist to reach a mutually satisfactory working agreement which offers a solution to the problem that is suitable for the patient.

After that goal is accomplished, the hypnotist proceeds to reintegrate all those other personalities back into the person's ordinary and primary personality. The patient then emerges from trance with the solution or solutions agreed upon by those different parts during the session installed to manifest in reality on the patient's behalf.

Unsurprisingly, aspects of parts therapy offer some of the few useful techniques available to help someone with MPD to integrate into a single unified personality. Some of those who were once MPD patients but were cured using parts therapy have gone on to become hypnotists themselves, dedicated to helping others with MPD.

Parts Therapy was originally pioneered by hypnotists Charles Tebbetts and Paul Federn in the 1960s and 1970s, and was later taught by hypnotist Roy Hunter as popularized in his 2005 book *Hypnosis for Inner Conflict Resolution: Introducing Parts Therapy.*

Parts Therapy and demonic possession

Demonic possession was a belief found in pretty much all ancient cultures and societies; people back then that evinced personalities other than their own were considered not psychologically ill, but possessed by a demon or demons that had to be exorcised before there could be any relief for their victims. (This was part of the demonic model of disease prevalent throughout the ancient world, and up to just a few centuries ago in the West).

Clearly the technique of parts therapy can help shed light on the treatment of demonic possessions as it occurred in antiquity—it turns out that features of those possessions intersect with many of those found in hypnotic processes. How does modern parts therapy stack up against exorcism as it was used back then? We will examine this further in Volume III, when we discuss the role possession and exorcism played in the lives of those living in ancient times…

Deep Trance Identification (DTI)

The term “deep trance identification” comes from the work of Milton Erickson, as found in *The Collected Works of Milton H. Erickson, MD: Volume 2: The Nature of Therapeutic Hypnosis*. Although physically disabled his entire life, Erickson was a prodigy and hypnotist who innovated the (extremely clever) techniques that were to go on to become “conversational hypnosis.”

Fig. 23 Milton Erickson

Deep Trance Identification, or DTI, is a hypnotic process wherein someone in deep trance temporarily assumes someone else’s personality for the purpose of acquiring desirable traits from that person which can (theoretically) persist after emergence from trance. Technically speaking, DTI is a type of “modeling," a method for acquiring knowledge and abilities from other people wherein a subject imagines being someone from whom he or she wants to obtain skills, attitudes, confidence, or other qualities.

Although in clinical practice it is almost always another person who is being modeled, our interest in this process concerns when it is used to model not another human being, but a god or some other mythical or religious entity. This is really not unusual—children routinely pretend to be their favorite super hero, doctor, teacher, or some other adult role model; but basically, we’re referring to instances when a person uses DTI in an

effort to transform him or herself into a god or goddess. Practices like DTI have been used by religious adherents for centuries—particularly among eastern religions—in an effort to “unite with the Godhead”.

In the case of DTI, its efficacy was verified by experiments conducted by Russian researcher Vladimir Raikov in the 1960s. For his research, Raikov used three groups of students from the Moscow Conservatory of Music—one group was not hypnotized; the second was hypnotized without DTI techniques; and the third group was hypnotized using DTI by modeling famous musicians from history. Students from the third group were found afterwards to score significantly higher than the other two groups in both technical proficiency and artistic interpretation. Because of his findings, DTI was given the name “Raikov Effect,” which it is still called in some circles.

Deep Trance Identification—Possible ancient applications:

The most promising identification of an ancient application of something like DTI is associated with theurgy, a Neoplatonic religious system developed just before paganism was finally extinguished with the advent of Christianity's complete domination of the West. Theurgy included, among other things, rituals and practices designed to unite the religious adherent with a god or goddess so they could somehow actually "become God." We will explore this in more depth when we come to discuss theurgy and its curious rites and practices.

Conclusion: Exotic trance states and advanced hypnotic techniques

These exotic trance states and advanced hypnotic techniques offer us new possibilities for uncovering how the same, or similar, processes could have been employed in antiquity. Instead of just being limited to common hypnosis, as it is popularly known, as an explanatory model, we now have a panoply of explanations to elucidate the sometimes-enigmatic descriptions of phenomena that have come down to us from ancient times.

CHAPTER
10

CHAPTER 10: A Brief History of Hypnosis

Fig. 24 Mesmer charging up a patient at his salon

From Mesmerism to Hypnotism—The Origins of Modern Hypnosis

Anthropology, classics, theology, and history study phenomena that involve trance, without understanding trance itself. The history of hypnosis in the modern West has been full of wrong ideas, metaphysical nonsense, scientific misunderstanding, and more. Both psychologists and practicing hypnotists have long misunderstood hypnosis and trance phenomena.

In order to recognize and understand trance in the ancient world, it's necessary to have an accurate view of what hypnosis is, and what it can and cannot do. Understanding the strange history of Western hypnosis will help provide a context to better understand and recognize instances of ancient hypnosis as they are presented in the pages ahead.

Literally hundreds of books have been written about the history of hypnosis. Here we'll address only what is relevant to understanding ancient

hypnosis and trance. (If you want to dig deeper, I recommend two books: *Hypnotism—A History* by Derek Forrest for an excellent overview; and *A Critical History of Hypnotism* by Saul Marc Rosenfeld, a great book that explores the historic reasons why hypnosis has failed to be recognized as a respectable academic discipline). Also, I apologize ahead of time to those readers who may have not found their favorite hypnotists listed here in this chapter, as our focus on the subject at hand, and time and space constraints, prevent me from mentioning many who could have been included…

Hypnotism was discovered (really "re-discovered") by German physician Anton Mesmer around 1770, while he was living in Vienna. At the time, he was a patron and friend of Wolfgang Mozart; but he moved his practice to France in 1778, when Viennese physicians accused him of fraud. There his newfound technique took Paris by storm, when it was found that he could instantly cure patients who had failed to heal after years of (expensive) treatments by other doctors.

Fig. 25 Anton Mesmer

Anton Mesmer believed that the effects of this discovery, which he called "mesmerism" (the term "hypnosis" would not be used until 1842), were due to a kind of subtle energy he called "animal magnetism." This was the name he coined for a kind of charismatic power he thought he personally generated and could be collected, conducted, and even stored, allowing him to project and impose his will on others. Mesmerism often produced odd behaviors in patients—convulsions, spontaneous healing, and other effects; yet nobody really understood how or why it worked.

Mesmer's practice in Paris became so successful that his home attracted a constant hive of patients, with people camping out on his lawn for just a chance to be touched by him. His concept of animal magnetism differed from modern scientific ideas about magnetism, in that he believed he could personally "charge" objects like water baths and even trees with it. This allowed Mesmer to hypnotize many people at once, even in his absence.

Mesmer had stumbled across hypnotic techniques—methods for intentionally inducing and directing trance—but didn't realize it. Instead, he attributed his successes to the "animal magnetism" generated by himself and by other living things; though the term was later changed to "fluidic magnetism" in the scientific periodicals of the time. This was induced by gestures called hand passes—basically waving the hands in front of someone or over a body part to "magnetize" the area using the operator's "energy."

Integral to mesmerism was Mesmer's claim that the phenomena he created were caused entirely by his own personal power, rather than by the techniques he happened to use. The hubbub his practice caused when he first began to ply his wares in eighteenth-century Paris (and especially the hostile reactions that were pouring in from his local competitors in the medical community, who were jealous of his success) finally reached a tipping point around the time of the American Revolution, when King Louis XVI of France (who was not as enamored with Mesmer as his wife Marie Antoinette) was finally forced to act. In order to settle the matter once and for all, he appointed a committee of experts to determine the merits of Mesmer's controversial claims. Interestingly enough, the commission he appointed included such luminaries as Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, inventor of the infamous execution device of the same name.

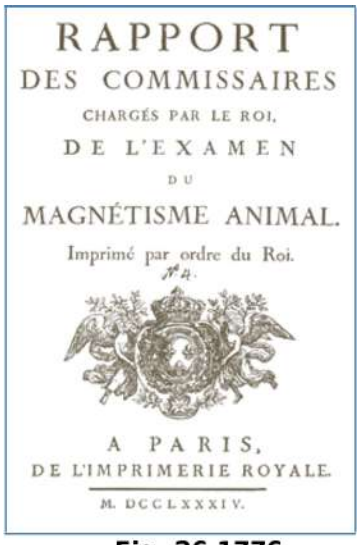
RAPPORT
DES COMMISSAIRES
CHARGÉS PAR LE ROI,
DE L'EXAMEN
DU
MAGNÉTISME ANIMAL.
Imprimé par ordre du Roi.
A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE.
M. DCC LXXXIV.

Fig. 26 1776 Commission Report to Louis XVI on Mesmer

It was in fact Benjamin Franklin himself who gave the final verdict:

Mesmer's effects were entirely due to the power of suggestion and imagination, and not to any of the phenomena proposed by him in his grandiose occult theories. Mesmer got some techniques and methods right, but he was totally wrong when it came to what caused them. So it took none other than America's founding father, Benjamin Franklin, to make the final call needed to debunk Mesmer's pseudo-scientific theories.[29]

However, despite the findings of the French King's commission, mesmerism and its fluidic theory persisted over the next 100 years (mainly because no other viable theory had been put forward to replace it). Mesmerists in France and Europe set up their practices inside the various hospitals of the time, often giving public demonstrations there; and though it took some time, eventually mesmerism spread to became popular in England. Many of the mesmerists repeatedly featured at their seminars their star somnambulists, who were almost always women who became their personal trance virtuosos and permanent members of their presentation entourage.

The immense popularity of mesmeric demonstrations, and the trance virtuosos that starred in them, often drew large crowds; and eminent people from among the English social elite flocked to attend these demonstrations, paying top dollar to do so (and greatly enriching the mesmerists involved). Both author Charles Dickens and his illustrator, George Cruikshank, were enthusiastic spectators, Dickens later becoming quite a supporter of mesmeric research.[30] But these spectacles inevitably ended up infuriating skeptical hospital administrators and other doctors, who were just trying to run a hospital, which usually resulted in the mesmerists being kicked out (or at least forbidden from giving any more presentations there).

In a flashback to the way trance was used for prophetic purposes in the ancient Greco-Roman world (a topic covered in depth in Volume II), mesmerists claimed their trance virtuosos were able to exhibit paranormal abilities while in somnambulism. These included ESP, "visionless seeing" (wherein they were said to be able to "see" items in front of them even with their eyes bandaged shut), and the ability to diagnose others' illnesses.[31] Although the mesmerists making these claims were indeed sincere, they were often duped by their own clever virtuosos, who failed once tested under strict scientific scrutiny. They were also given to promoting the

“magnetic” part of magnetic fluid theory, performing various experiments using different types of metals, “magnetized” water (into which the mesmerist placed his finger to “magnetize it”), and even “magnetizing” trees and other non-metallic objects as Mesmer had once done. Patients in hospitals were given bulky magnetized metal contraptions to wear, and were restrained during the night to facilitate the circulation of magnetic fluid.

It did not help their case for scientific acceptance that mesmerists and mesmerism often overlapped with phrenology (which was very popular at the time), acupuncture, and homeopathy[32]. Phrenologists claimed that the shape of a person’s skull, bumps and all, could be mapped out and used to predict someone’s intelligence and character.[33] And, interestingly, acupuncture also first became popular at the same time (yes, it’s been around that long).[34]

By 1842, things had gradually shifted in favor of the acceptance of mesmerism as a legitimate practice. That was when the first pain-free surgical procedure in Britain was conducted during a thigh amputation performed on a 42-year-old laborer under mesmeric anesthesia by Dr. W. Squire Ward. However, critical disbelief again dismissed the well-attested results, with this surprisingly callous statement made by a Dr. Copland, who worked at the University College Hospital:

“…pain is a wise provision of nature, and patients ought to suffer pain while their surgeon is operating; they are all the better for it, and recover better.”

—Quoted by Derrek Forrest in his book *Hypnotism: A History*, (1999) p.181

As weird as that sounds coming from a doctor who had sworn the Oath to Asclepius to “refrain from causing harm or hurt,” that would not be the last time English doctors back then would assert similarly insidious and diabolical claims that betrayed the physician’s prime directive they had sworn to uphold. Similar objections were made against the successes of James Eisdaile, who will be discussed next.

It would not be until 1847 that the Catholic Church would declare that the use of animal magnetism (hypnosis) was no longer forbidden (as long as

it was not used for illicit purposes). Later, in 1956, Pope Pius XII officially approved the use of hypnosis by healthcare professionals.

James Esdaile—Surgical Anesthesia Using Mesmerism (A Very Strange Story Indeed)

Fig. 27 James Esdaile

James Esdaile, whose "Esdaile state" we have already briefly covered in chapter 8, had only read about mesmerism when he was a surgeon in India working for the British East India Company in the early 1800s. But instead of doing what was considered mesmerism at the time (because he had never seen it performed), he adapted a traditional Hindustani method of inducing anesthesia called Jar-Phoonk—a combination of the Hindustani words "jarna" (to stroke) and "phoonka" (to breathe). The name is an apt description for the procedure, as it involved repeatedly stroking the patient's head while breathing on them and, at the same time, making constant mesmeric-like hand passes over their bodies, sometimes for hours at a time. In fact, it usually took anywhere from two to eight hours to bring a patient into a deep trance with total anesthesia appropriate for performing pain-free surgeries. He often hired natives to do it for him in his absence due to the time-consuming nature of the technique, which allowed him to have many patients in trance simultaneously.

Although his results were extraordinarily successful, news of his successful technique was not as well-received back home in England as one might expect. Instead, the same "enlightened" objections made against Dr.

Ward's pain-free surgery were repeated again against Esdaile: that pain was naturally mandated by God, and to interfere with that was to interfere with God's will. In any case, it would be only a few years before chemical anesthesia was developed and on the market, rendering the use of hypnotic anesthesia pretty much moot from then on.[35]

However, in truth the effectiveness of Esdaile's techniques may well have been due more to the local brand of trance-induction techniques applied by the Fakirs in India, than to any innovations Esdaile derived from what he had read in the papers about Mesmerism. Perhaps this serves as a great example of the prevalence of hypnotic practices across diverse cultures, both in the present and, as we will see, in the distant past.

James Braid—"Father of Hypnosis"

Fig 28. James Braid Performing Hypnosis

In 1841, Scottish surgeon James Braid (now considered "The Father of Hypnosis") correctly identified and established the purely natural factors responsible for mesmerism's effects, and (after trying some other alternatives) finally renamed it "hypnotism." This landmark discovery would serve to eventually liberate hypnosis from the realm of occult metaphysics, establishing it as a subject meriting serious scientific study.

It happened when Braid attended a demonstration by a visiting French mesmerist, Charles LaFontaine, in 1841. Although he approached

mesmerism with some skepticism, after the show he admitted there was indeed something real about what he had seen. He attended two more of LaFontaine's demonstrations, after which he became convinced that there was definitely some kind phenomenon at work, but wasn't really sure what it was.

While watching LaFontaine's demonstrations, he became intrigued by the behavior of the subjects' eyes during the process. Impressed by this, Braid began to research eye-fixation, conducting experiments with friends, family, servants and even patients. A real “eureka” moment famously presented itself to Braid when he arrived late for an appointment with a female patient and, upon his arrival, discovered her sitting in a chair staring in rapt fascination at the flickering flames of an oil lamp—already deep in trance before he even got there.

After some experimentation, he came to the conclusion that eye fixation was the key to mesmerism. Finally, he was able to put forward a scientific explanation completely different from the ideas of animal magnetism, invisible magnetic fluids, and occult powers derived from personal charisma that had long been advanced by mesmerists as the causative factors behind the phenomenon. Braid also dismissed the notion that trance was achieved through the lengthy ritual of hand gestures and passes, a technique considered integral to mesmeric treatments at the time. Braid found himself able to induce trance by just having his subjects focus their attention on a variety of illuminated objects—such as a candle flame or a small mirror, held at different distances from the face. This produced exhaustion in the eyelids, which would eventually close spontaneously and induce trance in the patient.

The sloppy and undisciplined experimental methods mesmerists used to support their paranormal claims, along with their inability to produce results under controlled conditions, caused a major backlash from the medical establishment. Mesmerism was completely dismissed as a fraud perpetrated by the somnambulists who participated in presentations; and the mesmerists were labeled as credulous charlatans (this despite evidence of many cures performed at hospitals where mesmerism was allowed).

Unfortunately, Braid’s discoveries did not bring a final end to mesmerism. Its influence and false presumptions still linger even now in

some places as a pseudoscience (a throwback to a time before scientific theories eventually supplanted unsubstantiated occult and metaphysical explanations for natural phenomena).

Braid's success in linking hypnosis with brain physiology, and his later conclusion that hypnosis was entirely a matter of suggestion, began the first modern conception of hypnosis as it has come to be known today. Unfortunately, his findings came a bit too late, as by the time of his death in 1860 hypnosis (in the form of mesmerism) had become so completely subsumed by mediumistic spiritualism, that any physician working with it was jeopardizing his medical practice and career as a physician.

Hypnosis Discredited by Its Association with the Spiritualism Movement of the Late 1800s and Early 1900s

The once-popular therapeutic applications of hypnosis, which had become all the rage in the medical establishment, were quickly almost totally abandoned when the field became hopelessly tainted and discredited by its association with—and appropriation by—the enormously popular spiritualism movement at the turn of the century. In an uncanny atavistic regression to ancient notions of somnambulists used as prophesying spiritual mediums (which will be discussed in depth later in Volume II), trance virtuosos became the rage and a “must-have” for fashionable séances and parties held by socialites that became extremely popular at the time.

As hypnosis and trance came to be entirely appropriated by the incredibly-popular spiritualist movement, academics would no longer touch the subject with a ten-foot pole. Exacerbating the situation were the sensational stories, popular in print at the time, of how hypnosis was being misused by lascivious hypnotists to seduce and rape women. Among the works that served to inflame the public fear of hypnosis was the novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* whose characters remain well-known and still appear in popular media now and then to this day.[36]

Hypnotism would most likely have gone totally extinct at that time had it not been for the itinerant, greasy, carney stage hypnotists who carried on

putting on their shows at fairs, at circuses—anywhere they could attract a crowd and put a hat out for donations.

The only way hypnotism even survived after being almost entirely appropriated by the popular spiritual movement of the turn-of-the-century was due to the itinerant stage hypnotists who kept it alive and continued to perform hypnosis shows for the public.

Working stage hypnotists experimented with hypnotic phenomena on a daily basis, primarily using play during their presentations—an informal yet, over time, legitimately empirical method of discovery. While hypnosis had become anathema to academia, stage hypnotists continued testing the limits of hypnosis and refining their techniques as a practical matter to help them make it during tough times.

1800s: Other Notable Hypnotists and Research Discoveries

Despite being appropriated, overshadowed, and temporarily tainted by the spiritualist movement at the turn of the century, scientific and medical progress in hypnosis was still being made in many corners of the world. Here are a few of the most important landmarks…

Marquis de Puységur

(1751–1825)—Follower of Mesmer who introduced the idea of calling the state of hypnosis (then called mesmerism) "artificial somnambulism." He renamed the condition that had been called "magnetic sleep," and discovered that it revealed the existence of a parallel but separate consciousness within us, later named the subconscious mind by hypnotist Pierre Janet.

Ivan Pavlov

(Late 1800s)—Physiological Model of Hypnosis. Defined the Soviet approach to hypnosis for decades afterwards. Applied classical behavioral conditioning theory to hypnotic phenomena.

Sigmund Freud

(1856–1939)—Hypnotic Regression Theory. Started out with hypnosis, but wasn't any good at it. Developed and established psychoanalysis instead. This led to its predominance in the field of psychology for over 100 years, serving to set the field back for decades. Psychoanalysis is now widely considered a pseudoscience.

Jean-Martin Charcot

(1825–1893)—His research into hypnosis and hysteria made medical hypnotism respectable.

Ambroise-Auguste Liébeault

(1864–1904)—Along with Bernheim (below), founder of the Nancy School of hypnotism. He argued for the importance of suggestibility, and emphasized the rapport between the hypnotist and the subject.

Hippolyte Bernheim

(1840–1919)—Considered by some to be the most important figure in the history of hypnotism, he founded the Nancy School with Liébeault and helped develop hypnosis for use in psychotherapy (hypnotherapy).

1900s: Notable Hypnotists and Research Discoveries

Emile Coue

(1857–1926)—Adopted Braid's methods and developed idea of using conscious autosuggestion. Originated saying to oneself "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better."

Pierre Janet

(1859–1947)—Coined the terms "subconscious" and "psychological dissociation" (later to be refined and revived by Ernest Hilgard as neo-dissociation theory). He was a great influence on many, including Sigmund Freud.

Dave Elman

(1900–1967)—Founder of modern hypnotherapy. S on of a stage hypnotist himself, Elman became the first to professionally conduct hypnosis training for medical doctors. His book, *Hypnotherapy,* is still a classic and an absolute must-read for anyone learning hypnotism. He was a very colorful and multi-talented guy, and even served as a spy in WWII! He was a master at innovating practical sets and sequences of procedures that were pretty much guaranteed to produce immediate trance results for different applications that are still taught today.[37]

Post WWII & 1950s:

Hypnosis as a therapeutic treatment didn't really catch on until after WWII. But the advent of television reintroduced hypnotism to a whole new generation, replaying horror movies from the 30s and 40s (often featuring nefarious hypnotists controlling innocent minds for lascivious ends) for impressionable young minds. And because, in the very earliest days of television, all broadcasts were performed "live," televised hypnotist stage shows offered the kind of instant and cheap production fare needed to fill station airtime. The excellent caliber of hypnotists who appeared on live TV back then helped to make many viewers who knew nothing about it familiar with hypnotism, which created a brief resurgence of popular interest in hypnotism at the time.

Clark Hull

(1884–1952)—An experimental psychologist, he demonstrated once and for all that hypnosis had no connection with sleep.

Fig. 29 Ormond

Ormond McGill (1913–2005)—"Dean of American Hypnotists": Stage hypnotist and hypnotherapist, author of the seminal "Encyclopedia of Genuine Stage Hypnotism" (1947) which was very popular and inspired many at the time to take up hypnotism.[38]

Hypnotism in the 1960s and 1970s:

Hypnosis became subsumed by the "psychedelic revolution" of the 60s, when genuine clinical and experimental studies were published which combined psychedelics with hypnosis ("hypnodelic therapy"). Unfortunately, it was not long before all such experimental research into psychedelics was banned entirely. In popular culture, hypnosis in various forms became part and parcel of the West Coast counter-culture that flourished at the time; this included gurus, cults, and everything New Age that have continued to influence popular culture to this day.

Milton Erickson

(1901–1980)—Developed conversational hypnosis using indirect suggestions (covert hypnosis performed without any formal induction "ritual").

Ernest Hilgard

(1904–2001)—Experimental and theoretical researcher who developed "neo-dissociation theory" in the 1970s. Famously postulated a "hidden observer"—an interior mental process that is simultaneously aware of all thoughts, conscious and subconscious, and selects which ones are available for conscious thought and which ones aren't.

2000s and Beyond

Darren Brown (1971 to present day)

Fig. 30 Derren Brown

Perhaps no one on this list of hypnotists comes closest to being a modern-day analog of how ancient magicians most probably functioned in ancient times than the British TV entertainer, polymath, and hypnotist, Darren Brown. This is because Darren is not just a hypnotist, he's also a very talented illusionist, mentalist, and even fake faith healer (among many other things). He often combines various arts of deception together with hypnotism (a technique called "compounding"), so that they serve together to powerfully reinforce one another and create a whole new "meta-effect"—the end result being many times more spectacular and impressive than the sum of its parts. This is what provides Darren with the sheer magic he displays during his very entertaining performances and TV shows.

Hypnotism- Establishment and Academic Failure

The origin and establishment of hypnotism as its own quasi-academic discipline in the West owes much to the historical circumstances surrounding its emergence. The timing of its introduction could not have been more auspicious, occurring on the heels of the Scientific Revolution at the climax of the Age of Enlightenment—a time of opening minds, and exciting new paradigm-shattering discoveries that still resonate today.

It's hard to overstate how sensational hypnosis was, and how enthusiastically it was received, when it was first introduced to the European popular consciousness.

Hypnosis' fortuitous appearance on the scene, at precisely the right time and place, provided a receptive context amenable to its rapid dissemination and flourishing. Had hypnosis been discovered years before or years later, it might not have had the same impact and lasting legacy; but as it was, its accompanying categories and terms spread rapidly and were almost casually accepted and eventually integrated into the Western canon of ideas and concepts.

An Artificial, Self-Made Category

Disciplines like astronomy, physics, and biology have long pedigrees reaching all the way back to classical times at least, if not very much earlier. But the field of hypnotism did not appear until the late 18th century; so, hypnotists—having no historical precedents of their own—created and developed their own schools of thought and approaches towards their subject matter. Without a classical legacy, they had to formulate from scratch the theories, nomenclature, principles, and all the other necessities of a field of research, doing so in ways appropriate and peculiar to their time, many of which still live on.

Hypnotists performed experiments, conducted research, and conjectured theories in an attempt to explain the array of phenomena they encountered. Methods and techniques were distinguished and categorized in relation to one another; hierarchical levels of trance were postulated; and "best practices" were established. Starting with their mesmerist forerunners, hypnotists began in earnest to sort through and classify their findings, in order to formulate suitable theories to account for the hypnotic phenomena they observed. To do so was, they believed, a necessary step towards reaching their unstated ultimate goal—to achieve the same academic status and legitimacy enjoyed by other accepted scientific disciplines of the time. Traditional hypnosis as we know it has a long and colorful history; but we have neither the time nor the space to cover it here in more detail, except as is needed to make our case (though there are plenty of good books on the subject out there for those readers who wish to find out more about it).

Hypnotism vs. Mesmerism—A Dispute over Causation

Though the category of "hypnotism" has prevailed ever since, as mentioned, mesmerism has somehow implicitly and explicitly persisted all the way to the present in various forms and under different names. Whereas modern principles of hypnotism correctly identify the cause of hypnotic effects as having originated in the hypnotized subject's own mind; mesmerists have persistently incorrectly attributed these amazing effects to invisible, unprovable forces.

From its mesmeric beginnings, hypnotism as a western cultural institution developed relatively independently so as to define itself in its own terms. The result was a self-made field of inquiry that started out as a creature of its own time, complete with its own peculiar and somewhat idiosyncratic self-referential framework, which hypnotists proceeded to refine and modify as appropriate; and over time they systematized their knowledge base into a coherent arrangement of induction methods, techniques, and producible effects.

Unfortunately (and maybe surprisingly…*or* not-so-surprisingly to some people), the field of hypnosis *never attained academic status as a scientific discipline in its own right,* as other nascent disciplines such as Egyptology were able to do. When it first emerged as a distinct academic discipline, Egyptologists took great pains to distinguish their research from the prevailing spiritualist and occult movements which had already appropriated elements of Egyptian culture to promote their pedigree; and before Egyptology could be recognized as a legitimate scientific field of study, it was necessary for them to purge their subject matter of all such metaphysical speculations, and then start from scratch and reexamine the raw data to formulate more suitable approaches that conformed with the academic standards and expectations of the time.

One will not, on the other hand, find a "Department of Hypnotism" at any university, nor will one see "Hypnotism 101" offered in any university curriculum. Eventually, the field of Egyptology was able to offload its metaphysical baggage and gain academic credibility (maybe too much, as it had to throw the baby out with the bathwater in regard to its interpretations of Egyptian mystical practices, as you'll see when we get to the chapter about the Pyramid Texts). But the field of hypnosis, unable to shed the

metaphysical baggage with which its subject matter had become thoroughly permeated, found itself unable to rise above it and achieve the same kind of academic recognition and legitimacy eventually attained by the field of Egyptology.

Thus, hypnosis has long been stuck in a kind of quasi-academic limbo of its own design—regarded as neither a respected branch of science, nor a pseudoscience deserving of absolute disrepute. What academic studies of hypnosis and trance there are have become subsumed within related fields of medical, psychological, and anthropological research. In essence, and by its own devices, hypnosis has devolved to become a weak and neglected stepsister of the sciences, subject to the constant radical reinterpretations imposed upon it by any outside academic discipline that happens to pass by in ways to promote their own particular academic agenda.

Instead, hypnosis is now taught almost exclusively in hundreds of private "professional" schools devoted to its training, none of which have any affiliation with outside academic or medical institutions or accredited institutes of higher education. The quality and nature of these training schools can vary widely; and like Muslim madrasas, much often depends on the particular ideology or approach taken by the owner/instructor in charge, or its founder, or the torchbearers for the founder's legacy, who may or may not teach their own idiosyncratic ideas along with everything else.

The quality and experience of hypnosis instructors can range from thoughtful and scientifically rational professionals and authors to New Age hacks. Since every school establishes its own criteria and requirements for graduation, as of now there continue to be no universally-recognized standards for determining a student's competence upon their completion of hypnosis training, or what they should and need to know before leaving. Graduates of such training schools who do not have any formal medical or scientific backgrounds are commonly referred to as "lay hypnotists;" and they comprise the overwhelming bulk of currently-practicing hypnotists. I only know of one American hypnotist organization at this time that restricts its membership to professional medical personnel and academics.

Now that you've been given the brief overview of hypnosis and its history in the West (or at least my take on it, anyway) helpful for understanding what's ahead, it's time for us to finally approach our subject matter...

CHAPTER
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CHAPTER 11: Trance in Other Cultures—Now and in the Ancient Past

Anthropology and trance

Trance as a cultural phenomenon has been a topic of study for modern anthropologists for some time now; in fact, the trance practices of hundreds of societies and cultures have been investigated and documented over the years. Yet this is just the tip of the iceberg, considering the vastness and diversity of today's humankind.

But if that's the case for modern anthropological studies of trance, how much vaster (and daunting) would a survey of trance have to be in order to span the entirety of human history? And without the contemporary data that anthropologists are able to gather from witnessing live trance demonstrations and gaining access to their participants, who would be available to answer their questions?

An interesting feature of anthropological trance research is the lack of agreement among researchers about how to define what trance is. This problem is common to most other disciplines, including psychology and neuroscience and the like. But even though trance has been the focus of many studies, it would be safe to assume that few, if any, of the anthropologists who research this field are actually hypnotists themselves, or are trained in hypnosis and its myriad subtleties. Some anthropologists, immersed in their culture of interest, are able to join in and experience trance themselves as it is defined by the particular tribe or society they're studying, recording the process faithfully with all the beliefs and mythology of its participants without any regard to how the trance they are examining is defined or how it really works.

But anthropologists aren't really interested in uncovering the mechanisms underlying trance—they more or less restrict their studies to the ways different cultures generate, experience, and interpret it, and how trance practices compare with one another. In the main, anthropology is concerned with the beliefs that influence behavior within a culture, not whether those beliefs are correct or offer scientifically tenable explanations for people's experiences. And, indeed, although the features of trance phenomena are, in practice, pretty much the same across all cultures, the particular beliefs and explanations each one has for the origins and nature of trance vary widely.

There is an interesting video called "Wijdan: The Mystery of Gnawa Trance," which concerns groups of trance musicians from two different African cultures coming together to play and combine their respective musical styles as a kind of experiment. The goal was to put on a collaborative concert in Europe.

One group of musicians were Sufis, the descendants of Moroccan slaves originally from Mali called the Gnawa. The other group was from the Bambara people of Mali—animists who played trance music so as to be possessed by powerful spirits in a manner similar to Voodoo ceremonies. So, monotheist Sufi trance musicians (for whom possession by spirits is not an option) are collaborating with African animists to play trance music together. They sit down and sketch out their plans like a schematic, plotting out how their music might gradually interweave so as to generate trance for their listeners. Both groups create trance with their music; *yet they have entirely different interpretations of the religious significance behind the trances they generate* for their hypnotized, dancing listeners. This serves as a great way to illustrate how trance is linked to music for spiritual purposes all around the world, even though it can be defined so very differently from culture to culture. *This was no doubt also the case in ancient times.*

Scholars from disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, and classics seem unsure about what trance is. They often refer to it in their findings without examining the dynamics of trance itself, ignoring what hypnotists already know about trance and what it can do; and sometimes they do so without ever mentioning the word "trance" at all![39]

Indeed, they most often bypass any of the psychological theories about

what trance is, and (with a few exceptions) they gloss over its definition and the dynamics behind it. Anthropological research studies about trance often involve music, the essence of which seems to elude them as they have only a limited understanding of the relationship between trance and music that is fundamental to their subject matter (see Appendix I: "Music is Hypnosis").

A notable exception to this is a great book called *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion and Trancing* by Judith Becker, a professor of ethnomusicology.[40] In her book, Becker exhibits a firm understanding of trance and its inductions across cultures, and she includes particularly interesting information about possession trance as it occurs today among Christian Pentecostal groups. In her last chapter, she discusses theories about trance and consciousness, including her own thought-provoking concepts about "becoming the music" and the temporary "loss of the autobiographical self" instigated by musical trance experiences. We will be investigating similar ideas in the appendices to be found at the very end of this book devoted to demonstrating music as its own form of hypnosis; its use in ancient Greece to manipulate psychological states; and a metaphor for "flow" that may have been intentionally embedded in the myth of Orpheus (who became a demigod in his role as the most famous musician of the Greco-Roman world).

But anthropology is sorely inadequate for addressing the mechanisms behind trance itself—mechanisms that underpin the cultures they are researching. It might be useful for pointing out the differences between current Western perceptions of trance and those of the rest of the world, if it didn't come up short when it comes to having a necessary background knowledge regarding trance and hypnosis that professional hypnotists have (whose job it is to induce trance on a daily basis). *To those cultures for which anthropologists have examined the use of trance, we can now add cultures from antiquity.*

Traditions of outsider hypnosis:

Are there individuals living now who practice hypnotism without being formally trained, or even knowing that they’re doing it? Definitely! I’ve even encountered some recent examples: decades before she knew anything

about “hypnosis,” a friend rediscovered her own version of hyperempiria, the pleasure-enhancing trance state used for erotic hypnosis.

“Many Russians are opening their wallets against their will, saying they're victims of 'street hypnosis.' The problem has deep roots.”

Kim Murphy, Times Staff Writer, January 29, 2005

It seems that there have always been self-taught outsiders who happened to figure out or stumble upon hypnotic principles on their own, and then put them to use. That was how Anton Mesmer first “discovered” what was to eventually become hypnosis in the first place. (As you’ve learned, he didn’t really understand what he was doing or why it worked, but nonetheless *it did work*.)

In Russia, Romani people (Gypsies) are notorious for their ability to quickly hypnotize and fleece the unwary.[41] Some of them are really, really good at it—*yet it's highly unlikely that any of them ever received any kind of formal hypnosis training as we know it.* We can assume as much, because their reputation for scamming people by using such techniques predates Mesmer's discovery by many centuries .

Clearly these Romani hucksters come from families or clans who independently developed their own home-grown knowledge base, which could be handed down and refined from generation to generation. No doubt they also had their own constructs and terminology to explain what *they thought* they were doing, though most of them would by now (if relatively recently) have access to popular Western-type hypnotism as well.

Logically speaking, *if traditions of outsider hypnotism exist now, then they certainly existed in ancient times as well.* Given that trance is a universal and perennial feature of human behavior, it would be highly unlikely that a culture would persist for any length of time without some clever observer of human nature eventually coming along to rediscover and figure out useful hypnotic techniques. Those who could acquire and effectively wield such a power within their society were often destined to serve their people as shamans, healers, and magicians (or con-artists).

Trance in Cultures Past: Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome

How could the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans have performed hypnosis if it was only discovered in 1770?

This question is the first and most obvious "elephant in the room" when it comes to our investigation: In 1770, Anton Mesmer discovered what would eventually become modern hypnosis; so how could people living way back in ancient Egypt and the Greco-Roman world possibly have performed hypnosis *if it hadn't even been discovered yet?*

Besides the fact that independent outsider hypnosis traditions have always existed (even prior to Mesmer's discovery), the answer lies in the difference between the categories used back then for people and phenomena, and the much different categories we are accustomed to using now. In a way this book is very much a work of translation—not between languages, but between the archaic concepts and categories found in ancient texts, and their closest and most exact linguistic equivalents today.

Of course, people in antiquity were unaware of our modern concept of hypnosis and all of the terms related to it, since neither the concept nor the terms had any conceptual and linguistic reality; but then, they also lacked the words to describe other terms we commonly use now, like "religion," "superstition," and "science." The way people in antiquity commonly thought about and interpreted the world around them was often radically different from, or even alien to, our present sensibilities and understandings.

On the other hand, ancient peoples did use terms for which we have no direct modern counterparts—jargon they used to describe the same kinds of phenomena we'll be examining. The kinds of problems this causes are reflected in the many academic battles waged over how exactly to define an archaic word or phrase whose precise shade of meaning crucially determines the ultimate interpretation of some important text (a good example would be Plato's concept of "thumos" in his theory of mind and its relationship with eros and logos).

Hypnosis existed thousands of years before there was any

word for it.

People in ancient times also used hypnosis differently than we do today —it was always (or almost always) combined with other things: music, chanting, ritual, magic, psychoactive drugs, special effects such as sleight of hand, ventriloquism, and so on. Today, on the other hand, hypnosis is almost always a standalone activity. Modern investigators, therefore, oftentimes fail to find examples of ancient hypnosis because they are most often looking (incorrectly) for examples that resemble modern standalone hypnosis; and finding none, they wrongly conclude that the ancients didn't use it. But just because someone in ancient times would never have been able to recognize that what she or he was doing was what *we* call hypnosis, *doesn't mean they weren't doing it.*

Unlike some other branches of knowledge that have survived to this day from antiquity, ancient hypnosis requires discernment and translation

There are many domains of ancient knowledge that are easier to examine because their concepts have survived intact until modern times. For example, much of the original concepts of architecture and mathematics have persisted in modern contexts.

When, however, it comes to examining hypnosis in antiquity, we are forced to divorce its application from its original context, and to reinterpret it in ways that conform to modern concepts and categories that we can understand. This is what makes our endeavor here very much one of translation.

As mentioned, the Greeks and the Romans had no word for hypnosis; but they also lacked a word for the concept we now call "psychology," which would be necessary to explain its dynamics and salient features. What we might now recognize as examples of psychological illness were often attributed by the ancients to manifestations of outside supernatural powers. These could take the form of possession by spirits, or divine inspiration (or madness) sent from the gods.

Thus, a reasonable approach to ancient hypnosis calls for both an understanding of its original contexts and the "non-hypnotic" explanations associated with it, together with our own reinterpretation of its phenomena in light of our own modern categories and concepts.

We can also attribute the phenomena described in ancient manuscripts to hypnosis by means of the process of elimination—there are really no other recognizable, non-pseudoscientific skill sets capable of eliciting the astounding phenomena we will be examining; and all of these phenomena contain elements and features that are congruent with those producible by somnambulism, or by other trance states with somnambulistic characteristics (like some of the exotic trance states already covered).

Were there, then, individuals or groups in ancient times who knew how to bring about a shift in the consciousness of others from the normal waking state to a hypnotic trance state? *Of course, there must have been,* since even now there are numerous groups and individuals—like the outsiders mentioned earlier—who somehow developed and applied their own native versions of hypnotism independent of our traditional Western one, which only goes back as far as Anton Mesmer and his discovery.

“The evidence also suggests that, in antiquity, it was much more of a ‘normal’ thing to fall into trance and out of it than today. These views will, perhaps, be treated with skepticism by many researchers, but to me there is no way around them, and here the shamanistic background is particularly important. Once we admit the central role of trance, many things fall into place almost at once…”

—Luck, George: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds, p.7

Because trance and hypnosis are such ubiquitous and universally shared human traits, the very idea that the ancients weren’t able to—or didn’t—practice what we now would call hypnosis is ridiculous and borders on the absurd; it would be the equivalent of saying that ancient people didn’t know how to fall asleep, or how to use lullabies to induce sleep in their children.

CHAPTER
12

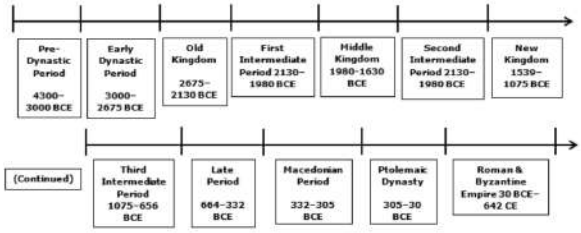
Pre-Dynastic Period 4300–3000 BCE
Early Dynastic Period 3000–2675 BCE
Old Kingdom 2675–2130 BCE
First Intermediate Period 2130–1980 BCE
Middle Kingdom 1980-1630 BCE
Second Intermediate Period 2130–1980 BCE
New Kingdom 1539–1075 BCE
(Continued)
Third Intermediate Period 1075–656 BCE
Late Period 664–332 BCE
Macedonian Period 332–305 BCE
Ptolemaic Dynasty 305–30 BCE
Roman & Byzantine Empire 30 BCE–642 CE

Fig. 31 Timeline of Ancient

CHAPTER 12: Trance and Hypnosis in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for so long that it endured three "dark ages" during its lengthy existence. These are known as "intermediate periods," during which Egypt went through political instability or occupation by foreign powers. During the Macedonian period, Egypt was conquered (along with the rest of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia) by Alexander the Great. At that time, he established the city of Alexandria which was to become the cosmopolitan capital and intellectual center of the Hellenistic world (the New York City of its day). It was home to the famous Library of Alexandria, which served as a magnet that drew the best and brightest minds from around the Greek-speaking world; and after Alexander's death, his empire was split among his loyal generals. Egypt was assigned to his general Ptolemy I Soter, who founded the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt until it became part of the Roman Empire in 30 BCE.

Egypt was influenced somewhat by the countries that surrounded it, though it's fair to say their culture was rather much more of an influence on them. Their practice of circumcision was adopted by the ancient Hebrews, and their influence can clearly be seen in the stories of the Old Testament where the Egyptians figure prominently. Egyptian religious influence extended through the time of early Christianity, when pagan detractors of the new cult accused Jesus of having learned Egyptian magic in Egypt while his family was temporarily exiled there, as told in the gospels. We will be exploring in Volume III the Egyptian religious concept of the resurrection of the body which was adopted early on by the Christians, a fact that made their cult a peculiar one to the pagans living with and around them.

Trance in Ancient Egypt

The ancient Greeks and Romans both traced the origins of their own sacred mysteries, and much of their knowledge, back to the ancient Egyptians, next to whom they considered themselves mere babes. So, it is appropriate that we should begin our survey of the use of hypnosis and trance in ancient Western civilizations here.

The Ebers Papyrus, an ancient Egyptian medical text dated around 1550

BCE, briefly mentions a physician using hand passes over a patient, which is reminiscent of mesmeric practices. Other than that, little evidence exists that would indicate the practice of anything we would recognize today as mesmerism or hypnotism; though in another sense, this is not surprising at all—we can assume that trance induction would have been part of the practice of magic, a super-secret proprietary field restricted to the priesthood and to select noble elites.

Yet it seems nearly impossible that the Egyptians didn't make use of some form of hypnotism, seeing as they had highly detailed and elaborate theological constructions for pretty much all other religious phenomena. Perhaps we have not yet discovered or deciphered the particular words they used for trance, since exact definitions for concepts found in dead languages such as ancient Egyptian can often be elusive.

Extraordinary and elaborate descriptions of imaginary worlds, and texts that serve as maps and tour guides to help the reader safely navigate the various perils that may be encountered there, permeate Egyptian literature throughout its thousands of years of existence. (A well-known example is the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which was used from approximately 1550 to 50 BCE). These descriptions and texts logically imply some belief that the Egyptians thought there were at least a few people who could somehow gain access to those worlds. Though their destination may have been the netherworld, or the celestial worlds found among the stars (which some scholars regard to have been one and the same), these kinds of fantastic journeys were not—as was long thought—restricted to dead people on their way to the afterlife. For there seems to be very good evidence that some people were also able to make journeys to these realms and back *while still alive* .

Assuming there were those who at least believed they were able to make trips to these mythical places and back again, there is only one modus operandi capable of making that happen— *deep trance* . The kinds of deep trance available to them may or may not have included the use of psychotropic drugs to do the trick—we do not know.

As we will consider in Volume II when we look at the Eleusinian mysteries that were held in ancient Greece, if psychotropic drugs *were* used then trance would have been a useful and necessary adjunct to guide

initiates and keep them on track while under their influence. To do otherwise would be like herding cats at a Grateful Dead concert — psychotropic drugs on their own are not really conducive to understanding and remembering the kinds of profound lessons revealed during an initiatory narrative, lessons that must be understood and remembered for one to experience a proper and successful initiation. As anyone who has used psychedelics before already knows, more often than not *psychedelics take you for the ride*— rendering extremely difficult, if not impossible, the possibility of controlling or channeling the drug experience without help and in very specific ways that will provide a coherent and successful initiatory experience.

There does seem to be good evidence, which we will be examining here, for the induction of deep trance states in early Egypt, and in particular those reserved for the Pharaoh himself. Whether those trance states were mesmeric or drug-induced (or both) is not clear, as any details about their induction are totally lacking (again, likely due to the strict veil of secrecy surrounding magical techniques in general, the knowledge of which was most probably strictly confined to members of the priestly initiated elite).

It is not until late Greco-Roman times that we find evidence of mesmerism being practiced in Egypt as found embedded in some of the practices described in the famous Greek Magical Papyri. These are a collection of magical spells, hymns, and rituals dated from the 100s BCE to the 400s CE. We will explore them in depth later in Volume II.

There is also evidence from late antiquity—during the very final moments of paganism—that hypnotic states were a familiar phenomenon and were regarded as a kind of spiritual possession. (We'll discuss this in more detail in the chapter on theurgy.) But as of yet, there is no knowing whether such beliefs from late antiquity were also found among those living thousands of years earlier, during the time of the pyramids.

Ancient Egyptian Medicine

The Egyptians were the first in ancient Western civilization to study the human body and the medical arts in depth, and they did so for an unbroken period of at least 3,500 years. Autopsies on cadavers were forbidden by the

ancient Greeks and Romans, due to strict religious laws concerning the dignified burial and treatment of bodies after death. This made it extremely difficult for students to advance their medical studies, and for any research to be performed into human anatomy and physiology. The famous Roman physician Galen was able to get around this somewhat by becoming a doctor for gladiators who were injured while fighting in the arena—"where the rubber meets the road," as they say.

But this was never a problem for the ancient Egyptians—mummification required a kind of autopsy, plus an intimate knowledge of human anatomy. Later in antiquity, any aspiring Greek or Roman student of medicine was obligated to make the trip to Alexandria in Egypt in order to receive what was then considered a proper medical education. There aspiring physicians were free to perform post-mortem studies and learn human anatomy firsthand without fear of violating any laws.

Early on, the Egyptians already had a wide array of medical specialists—doctors for the eyes, for the ears, for skin conditions, for female diseases, and so on. They even had medical terms for various types of psychological illnesses and their diagnosis. Although an argument from ignorance, we really have little reason to think that they did not also have a vast knowledge base concerning trance states and their inductions they would have been accumulated and refined over thousands of years. Evidence for trance in the Pyramid Texts presented in the next chapter would seem to favor that they did…

As mentioned previously, it's likely that any civilization persisting long enough would eventually be bound to discover (or rather, *rediscover*) at least some of the hypnotic principles we recognize now, and then apply them for their own purposes. Inevitably—possibly over many generations, or even hundreds of years—some clever prodigy or keen observer of human behavior would come along and either discover, or stumble upon, enough about hypnosis to get things going. In the case of the ancient Egyptians, that individual may well have been the polymath god-man Imhotep.

Imhotep

Fig. 32 Imhotep

Imhotep is considered to have been the Archimedes or Einstein of his day, around 2700 BCE. He seems to have been both a real person and a prodigy whose legacy had such a great influence on so many aspects of Egyptian culture, that he was deified and worshipped as a god after his death. Among other things, he was the vizier (second in command) to the third-dynasty Pharaoh Djoser, probably the architect of his step pyramid at Saqqara, high priest of Ra at Heliopolis, an astronomer, and may well have been responsible for designing the first buildings to be supported by stone columns, among other things.

For our purposes here, however, he was mostly famous for becoming the Egyptian god of medicine and for the "sleep temples" established in his name used to provide sick and injured individuals healing dreams. We know of at least three sleep temples devoted to Imhotep, although there were at times other sleep temples as well dedicated to many other gods and goddesses (and even to Queen Hatshepsut). Later on, the Greeks called Imhotep "Asclepius," identifying him with their own god of healing who was most famous for his sleep temples throughout the Greco-Roman world. But the fact is that we have much more information about the sleep temples of Asclepius, compared with the almost nothing we know about those that had operated in Egypt long before then.

We do not know whether the Egyptians utilized in their sleep temples the same, or similar, types of hypnotic techniques as the ones that would later be employed in those of Asclepius we'll be examining later. It may have been that, like all the other arts and sciences the ancient Greeks claimed to have received from ancient Egypt, the hypnotic techniques used in the Asclepian temples were also originally derived from there. But since little to nothing is known about Egyptian sleep temples and what went on there, we will instead postpone our discussion of sleep temples, and the healing process known as "incubation" used there, to the upcoming chapter devoted

to the Greek god Asclepius.

CHAPTER 13: The Pyramid Texts—Evidence for Hypnosis and Trance

There has been a long history of Egyptologists denying that the Egyptians had any mystical doctrines and practices connected with the world of the living, despite everything to the contrary said about them by the ancient Greeks. Thus, pretty much everything they discovered about Egyptian religion was automatically interpreted as being funerary in nature. As unlikely as that sounds, this pretty much remains the case today; but in his book *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts* , author Jeremy Naydler provides convincing evidence that at least some of these texts are unlikely to have been funerary at all.

Instances of trance induction in the Pyramid Texts

First discovered in 1881 by Gaston Maspero, the Pyramid Texts were found engraved on the interior tomb walls of kings beginning with Unas—the last pharaoh of the 5th Dynasty (around 2345 BCE)—and continuing through the kings of the 6th Dynasty and all the way up to the reign of King Igby in the 8th Dynasty. Before Unas, there were no texts on the walls of any Egyptian tombs; nor were any to be found inside the Great Pyramid (around 2550 to 2490 BCE). But even though they first appear on the walls of King Unas, it is most probable that they appeared in oral form much earlier on, possibly in pre-dynastic times.

Not only are the Pyramid Texts notable for being the first examples we have of ancient Egyptian literature, they are also

the oldest example of extended writing found anywhere in the world.

For a span of 180 years or so, versions of the Pyramid Texts were engraved, not just on the walls inside the tombs of kings, but sometimes within the tombs of their wives as well (although their respective versions differed somewhat). However, the version found inscribed inside the tomb of King Unas is unique in that it is the only complete version of the Pyramid Texts that has ever been found—all other surviving examples are either fragmentary or incomplete.

Fig. 33 Pyramid Texts of Unas

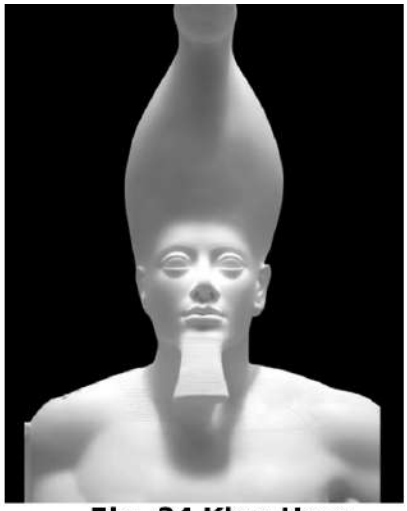

Fig. 34 King Unas

The contents of the Pyramid Texts of Unas have been well-studied since they were first discovered by French Egyptologist Gaston Maspero in 1881, and they have been grouped together by Egyptologists into roughly 750 "utterances," many of which begin with the standardized formula *djed medu* —"words spoken." The numbers assigned to the utterances are for modern identification purposes only, referring to their respective locations on tomb

walls, and not the sequence in which the Egyptians may have recited them.

These utterances appear to be magic words and divine names that were needed to equip the pharaoh for his journey through the many obstacles he would face on his way to the land of the dead. Although the texts are the oldest known to have been written in Old Egyptian, they are surprisingly translatable because of their close similarities with the vocabulary already well-known from Middle Egyptian, the "standard" version of the language most familiar to and studied by Egyptologists. There are a few words that only appear in the Pyramid Texts and therefore remain elusive, so their true meanings can only be guessed at; but on the whole, they are relatively coherent and understandable at least as far as their vocabulary and grammar is concerned, especially given their *extreme* antiquity.

It is fortunate for us that the best-preserved (and oldest) version of the Pyramid Texts was the one found in the tomb of Unas, as his tomb has since been identified as having a special canonical status, the spells from which continued to resonate throughout the long history of Egyptian religion. Over many centuries, there was a gradual "democratization" of these religious texts. They were originally purposed only for the Pharaoh, who had a unique divine status that belonged to no one else; but over time, many of the same utterances began to appear on the coffins of nobles and others of high rank as well (the Coffin Texts, c. 2134 to 2040 BCE). Even later than that, in the New Kingdom (1550 to 1069 BCE), many of the same utterances were included in the so-called "Book of the Dead" (the proper name for which was really "The Book of Coming Forth by Day"), which any commoner with enough money could purchase and place in the tomb with him as a guide book for the afterlife ahead.[42]

“O Unas, you have not departed dead, you have departed alive to sit upon the throne of Osiris…”

—Utt. 213 Pyramid Texts

Yet despite these changes in meaning, the Pyramid Texts contain recurrent phrases along the lines of "Unas has not died! Wake up Unas!", and the quote above. These certainly don’t sound like the kind of things one might say to a corpse or a mummy; *b ut they do sound like the kinds of things that might very well be addressed to a "revivifying" king who is ritually rehearsing his death by way of deep trance.*

“Awake! Turn yourself about! So, shout I. O king, stand up and sit down to a thousand of beer…”

—Utt. 233 Pyramid Texts

In fact, some of the utterances addressed to the king, like the one cited above, sound suspiciously like what a hypnotist would say to a patient just emerging from a deep and protracted trance: “On the count of three, you can emerge from trance—One, two, and three! Now open your eyes, shake off your drowsiness, and have something to eat!”

The king is told "Awake!," but it sure doesn't sound as if the person addressing him (presumably the officiating priest) meant anything like "awaken from sleep." Rather, it seems fairly obvious here that the priest's efforts to rouse the king were to help him get back to normal after coming out of a lengthy trance ritual disoriented and very, very hungry.

"O King, raise yourself up to me, betake yourself to me…"

—Utt. 223 Pyramid Texts

If so, how could utterances addressed to a living pharaoh end up alongside others, which are clearly funerary in nature, on the same walls of his tomb? The answer probably has to do with the important "Sed" festival and jubilee, which was celebrated at thirty-year intervals (and sometimes more often) by the King during his lifetime. As this was a memorable occasion for any king as well as for the entire country of Egypt, it appears that some of the rituals he performed during the Sed festival included his "rehearsal" of death and dying by way of deep trance, possibly with the help of mind-altering drugs.

"It [utterance 223] is concerned with awakening the king from what would appear to be a trancelike state, and ensuring the return of his spirit to the body…"

—Jeremy Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, p.14

Of course, some Sed festival rituals were kept super-secret as they were sacred rites meant only for the king (and for the few elite high priests who administered them). Although not many exact details are known about the sequence of events that happened at the Sed festival, enough has survived to give us some clues as to what the Pharaoh did and experienced during its celebration.

"I am Horus, my father's heir. *I am one who went and came back*."

—Utt. 260 Pyramid Texts (Italics added)

Some of the rituals were physical tests of strength (running four times around the boundaries of the festival temple's field, for example); but among the things the king was required to do during his Sed festival was to

also, apparently, participate in ritual trance experiences designed to renew and revitalize both his divine status and the entire country as a whole. Along with trance-induced celestial journeys, visits to speak with the gods, and trips to the netherworld, the whole festival served as an ordeal intended to reassure the King's subjects that he was still "large and in-charge." By successfully completing all the required rituals of the Sed festival, the king proved to everyone that he remained physically and spiritually fit to rule, maintaining his status as god-king for the Egyptian people. At the end of the Sed festival the King was re-crowned, as he had been rejuvenated and confirmed worthy to resume his reign for years to come.

Scenes depicting this memorable event in the life of any pharaoh, and the country of Egypt as a whole, would surely deserve to be included along with the other, more funerary utterances inscribed on the walls of the king's tomb; and it would indeed have made sense that utterances associated with the king's ritualized rehearsal of dying—which was performed during his Sed festival—would stand alongside those concerned with his actual death.

"…if a given religious text appears to be concerned with post-mortem experiences, we need to look at it very carefully, because it could be describing mystical experiences of the living that parallel those that a person will undergo after death."

—Jeremy Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, p.51

These mystical experiences could only have been brought about by way of induced trance, whether aided by the use of psychotropic drugs or not.

We can only speculate as to what kind of trance states may have been induced to facilitate the king's out-of-body mystical experiences. If the king was guided through the visions and their imagined geographies by a priest reciting from a text used as a hypnotic script, and the king was intended to be able to recall his trance journeys afterwards, then that would most likely rule out the kind of super-deep trance states characterized by amnesia and lack of any response to outside stimulation (such as the Esdaile state and Ultra Depth). The need to rouse the king back to wakefulness afterwards rules out hyperempiria (since in that case he would already be very much wide awake). That leaves us with the closest modern analogs—somnambulism, or maybe Ultra Height.

"The type of mysticism that existed in ancient Egypt is perhaps best described as 'visionary mysticism.' It entailed direct experience of the spirit world through states of consciousness in which the soul left the body in an ecstatic flight, to encounter ancestors, gods, and spirits, and to experience an inner rebirth."

—Jeremy Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, p.8

It's also possible that the Egyptians devised religious inductions, trance experiences, drug-trance combinations, and exotic trance states that we remain unaware of. Our modern tradition of intentionally inducing trance only goes back some 250 years or so; whereas ancient Egypt had *thousands of years* to develop and perfect their religious rituals, trance inductions, hypnotic suggestions, and other trance-related techniques—making it unwise for us to underestimate them in this regard.

"A stairway to the sky is set up for me, that I may ascend on it to the sky"

—Utt. 267 Pyramid Texts

Jacob's Ladder-Type Imagery in Pyramid Texts

This is another scenario that resembles a common modern hypnotic induction technique. Hypnotists routinely use images of stairways or ladders to help their subjects navigate trance. The ladder helps the subject imagine themselves going down to "deepen" their level of trance, or returning "up" from trance to the waking state. It's a very easy and useful metaphor for a hypnotist to change a subject's "depth of trance."

"When I ascend to the sky on the ladder of the god, my bones are reassembled for me, my limbs are gathered for me, and I leap up to the sky in the presence of the Lord of the Ladder."

—Utt. 478 Pyramid Texts

Ladders to the sky are frequently found in shamanic rituals performed all around the world, for which trance is a prerequisite. Often these trances are drug-induced, which may also have been true in ancient Egypt; and being dismembered and then reassembled (as in the utterance above) is a common feature often included in shamanic ceremonies.

It seems very likely, then, that the ladder imagery used by and for the pharaoh here was likewise used to intensify or decrease the level of trance he experienced. This would be especially appropriate for an Ultra Height-type of induction, as Ultra Height is especially effective for creating simulations of metaphysical phenomena and experiences.

Egyptian identification of gods with parts of the body

From the top of the head down to each of the toes, the ancient Egyptians had exhaustive lists of the parts of the human body, and the corresponding god or goddess that presided over each one of them. This no doubt served as a convenient way to identify the correct god or goddess to supplicate, depending on which part of the body required healing.

But it may be that such lists of body parts could have also been used for

hypnotic applications, as they are highly reminiscent of a popular hypnotic induction used today—the body scan relaxation technique. In this technique, the subject is told by the hypnotist to close his or her eyes and then proceed to "scan" slowly down from head to toe. They are urged to notice the sensations felt in each and every body part before proceeding to the next; then, after scanning from head to toe, the subject is supposed to do the same thing but in the opposite direction from toes to head. This is repeated, and combined with other hypnosis induction techniques introduced by the hypnotist, until the subject goes into trance.

In this case, hypnotic subjects create their own mental lists of body parts on the fly as they go through an induction which has them scan through them all. So it may be that, with the right kind of recitation and repetition, the Egyptians could have accomplished the same thing; and the visualization of each of the gods or goddesses responsible for the various body parts would only have added to the efficacy of the technique.

CHAPTER
14

CHAPTER 14: Hypnotism in Ancient Greece and Rome

From here on, we will mostly examine documented instances of hypnosis from ancient sources. Because the ancient Greeks and Romans lacked equivalent words for the modern terminology we use now for hypnosis and trance, it is not possible to find explicit examples of hypnosis among ancient texts. Consequently, we will look for instances and situations where the use of hypnotism and trance is implicit in the descriptions that have come down to us.

But just because we will be looking at instances that are implicit rather than explicit, this doesn't necessarily mean they aren't solid examples, and fit to serve as credible evidence for the use of hypnosis by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Although hypnosis *per se* is never mentioned in the resources we will be examining, many of the descriptions they contain couldn't possibly be referring to anything else.

In this section, we will mostly be looking at documented incidents in the Greco-Roman world, in which some kind of hypnosis was described or otherwise indicated. There are more examples, but they involve magic and have therefore been saved for Volume II where our focus shifts to the role hypnosis played in magic as it was used in public performances.

But first, it is worth looking at how the art of persuasion became important for the ancient Greeks and why. The various definitions of the word "persuade" all share one common factor: to make someone agree to do something *by giving them reasons to do so.* To persuade someone is to get your way by using arguments that are in favor of what you want someone to do or not do, or sometimes just by asking them over and over until they

finally relent (as young children are often wont to do as a way to manipulate their parents).

Hypnotism is often classified as a persuasion technique, and a very powerful one at that. This is especially true in regard to what is called "conversational hypnosis," wherein words are carefully chosen and embedded in what sounds like a normal conversation to manipulate a listener's beliefs or behavior. This is a *covert* application of hypnosis, which cleverly makes use of the way people normally process the words and phrases they hear. Thus, conversational hypnosis is the method of choice for sales people and those who use hypnotism for "speed seduction" (when men do not want the women they are talking with to know they are secretly being hypnotically manipulated).

Though I mention conversational hypnosis here, I should point out that it's presently impossible to verify that the ancient Greeks and Romans were in any way aware of such a technique, or that they used anything like it. It would certainly have been of great advantage for some of them to have done so, and it's theoretically possible that some really did.

I should also point out that however easy it might be for me to pick out and identify covert techniques of conversational hypnosis as they are used in English in both speech and writing, Greek and Latin are another affair altogether. The main difference between the two is the fact that English relies on *word order* to structure sentences, whereas Greek and Latin rely mostly on *word endings* to indicate subject and object and to place emphasis; this makes them radically different when it comes to applying the sort of conversational hypnotic techniques one would ordinarily use in English. Although I'm familiar with Classical Greek, I don't even know what that would look like in that language or in Latin. So I will leave it to others better versed in the finer points and subtleties of those languages to someday explore that possibility, as it would seem to be a mistake for anyone to underestimate the ingenuity of the ancient Greeks and Romans when it comes to such matters.

Moreover, though we cannot be sure whether Greek and Roman orators used words hypnotically to exercise a subconscious influence as it is possible to do in English, they certainly consciously utilized other methods of this sort—how, when, and where one raised the tone and volume of one's voice while speaking in public would have had a subconscious effect on the listener; and body language, gesture and other mannerisms, when purposefully used along with what was said, would likewise have influenced listeners beyond just the content of what was being said. In other words, the *dramatic aspects* of public speaking would also act as subconscious influences in the background.

Even though we've dispensed for now with any possibilities of finding *subconscious* hypnotic techniques that may have been utilized by Greek and Roman orators,[43] it's still worth exploring the techniques they used to *consciously* influence their listeners. By "consciously," we mean influencing them *by giving them reasons* to agree with the speaker. As you already know, reasons are not necessary for influencing someone in hypnosis; that is because his or her ability to use their critical faculties for decision making has already been completely disabled, making any need for persuasive reason a moot point.

“Inspired incantations consisting of words bring on pleasure, dissipate pain—for when the influence of the spell meets the opinion-forming part of the mind, it soothes and persuades and finally changes it by magical art.”

—From Gorgias’ *“Encomium of Helen”*

The kind of conscious, argumentative persuasion we are referring to here was called *rhetoric* if it seemed to be applied to a just cause; and *sophistry* if it was used—as Socrates says—to make the better cause seem worse, and the worse one better. Along with grammar and logic, rhetoric was one of the “three ancient arts of discourse” considered essential for a proper education. Even now, on college debate stages throughout the modern world, contests are held to test and measure the students’ public oratorical skills—skills that continue to remain useful to this day for anyone seeking a career in law or politics. In these contests, individuals or teams are assigned a side or claim to argue, which they may or may not agree with.

Gorgias and the sophists: masters of persuasion

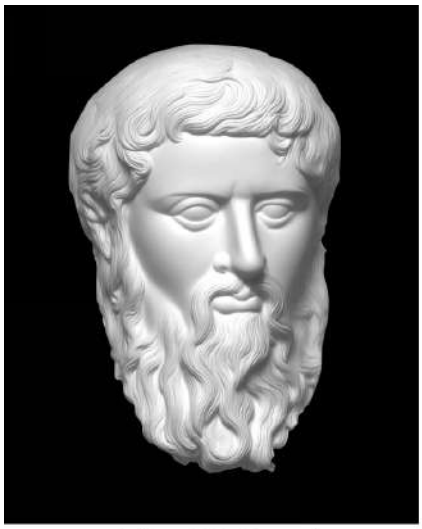

Fig. 35 Gorgias

Gorgias (c.483-376 BCE), an ancient Greek sophist, was the most renowned rhetorician of his time. He is best remembered nowadays as a character in the dialogue about sophists, named after him, that Plato wrote in the 4th century. Born in Sicily, Gorgias eventually made his way to Athens, where all the action was (including lots of prospective pupils). He later became the teacher of Hippocrates, the most famous physician of his day.

According to Satyrus of Callatis, a historian and biographer who lived before the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor (181–146 BCE), Gorgias was said to have been the only known pupil of Empedocles—a flamboyant figure who was both a famous philosopher and a magician. Satyrus also states that Gorgias had been present when Empedocles engaged in sorcery; but then he goes on to add a caveat, warning that some of the historians and biographers of his day had a tendency to make one pre-Socratic philosopher the pupil of another without much evidence, implying that these stories about Gorgias and

Empedocles may really have just been anecdotal.[44] If however they are true, then Gorgias may have been well-versed in the ins and outs of magic well before he mastered the art of rhetoric.

Knowledge of the art of rhetoric, which first began in ancient Greece around the time Athens became a democracy, was deemed indispensable for anyone wishing to become an orator, a politician, or any other kind of professional who had to engage in public speaking. All such professionals required persuasive and effective speaking skills to be successful. Among them were the sophists, of whom Gorgias was considered to be a prime example—they were primarily itinerant teachers of rhetoric and philosophy, some of whom became quite wealthy from those who sought them out from around the Greek world to be educated in the art of oratory.

The sophists, and Gorgias in particular, became major targets of criticism by Socrates as portrayed by Plato (above all in Plato's dialogue named for him), who objected to their amoral approach as the sophists were supposedly concerned with "winning" at all costs *without regard as to whether the arguments they put forward were true or not.* For the sophists, rhetoric was an amoral tool to be used for persuading others, not for finding out the truth about anything.

“Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men.”

—Plato

To philosophically justify their purely pragmatic approach, the sophists promoted an outlook to match, becoming atheists and relativists who were cynical about traditional religious beliefs and institutions. Thus, they were not only criticized by Socrates and Plato for leading people away from the truth, but also for seeking to upend the traditional social order which kept society from slipping into anarchy and chaos.

There is much more to be said about Gorgias and the sophists, but our main concern here is how they regarded their use of the power of words. In some ways, hypnotism and rhetoric are very similar—both are “hands-free” skillsets that rely on speech and words alone to accomplish their respective goals.

“Two different arts of incantation and magic have been invented, namely (those producing) delusions of mind, and deceptions of the opinion-forming part of it.”

—Gorgias (DK 82 B 11 § 1 0)

We see here that Gorgias is distinguishing between two kinds of what he considers to be magic—the kind that produces delusions of the mind (subconsciously, as a hypnotist would put it nowadays); and the kind that deceives the “opinion-forming part of it” (i.e., what we would now call the conscious mind and its opinions about things, which can be verbally manipulated by way of argument and debate).

As of yet, we have only discussed hypnosis in terms of its use in healing, and in the contexts of religion and magic; but here we will begin to explore other, considerably darker and more questionable aspects of the art of persuasion—the power to deceive.

Much of Volume II is devoted to how ancient magicians used hypnosis (among other things) to deceive people into believing they were able to create miracles and wield divine superpowers. We do not know how many of the ancient magicians living back then actually believed their own claims (the same question could be asked about Christian televangelist faith healers today), but most magicians would probably have been very aware

and conscious that the techniques they used (including hypnosis) were specifically designed *to deceive.*

Similarly, the goal of rhetoric could also be to deceive. Since the sophists were not really concerned with promoting or defending the truth, a rhetorician would often find himself using the techniques of deception to win his side of an argument even though he knew it was not true.

The amoral nature of both the art of rhetoric and hypnosis can be used for either good or evil. How much would adding hypnotic suggestions to rhetorical speech create a combination of the two that would be even more effective than just using rhetoric and conscious argumentation alone? As of now, we cannot say…

The reader may recall the reference to Russian Roma (gypsies) earlier in the introduction—fleecing the unwary by using their own brand of home-grown hypnosis (like the example of one of them who walked into a bank and hypnotized the teller to hand over wads of cash without her even being aware she was doing it). In such cases, persuading the hapless victim into carrying out what he or she was told to do by the scammer did not involve "talking the person into doing it" with appeals to reason and rational arguments, as we might normally think of when it comes to persuading someone. In describing "the two arts of incantation and magic" mentioned earlier, the first kind of "magic" Gorgias refers to sounds a lot like hypnosis —the "delusions of mind" used on the unwary bank teller; while the second kind no doubt refers to the rational argumentation used in rhetoric (his specialty) to persuade others.

“The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.”

—Gorgias, *The Encomium of Helen,* 14

In the above quote, Gorgias compares the power words have over the mind to the power of drugs. Just as drugs can cause disease and end life, words can induce either pleasure or pain, and can cause either confidence or fear by an evil force casting a spell over the mind. While bearing certain distinctions in mind, we have already drawn our own equivalence between these two—that someone high on drugs is in a trance state, just like someone in a trance induced by using words alone; and both are capable of leaving someone vulnerable to unwanted influences from nefarious outside forces that may not have his or her best interests at heart.

“Effective rhetoric had a hypnotic effect on audiences captured by the orator’s verbal spell...In sum, it appears that rhetoric was for Gorgias verbal magic capable of exerting what one of his great critics, Plato, called an ‘almost supernatural influence on audiences’.”

— Herrick, James A. (2008). *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction.* Pearson.

One of the most effective verbal means to induce trance in listeners is a charismatic oral delivery. Televangelists and Southern Baptist ministers are well aware of this and use the quality of their voices accordingly, often with intense repetition and a rhythmic cadence to heighten the effect. As mentioned, we do not know whether or not Gorgias utilized the sort of embedded commands and other linguistic hypnotic techniques that are commonly used in conversational hypnosis nowadays; but even so, the public reception to his speeches—and the reactions of his audiences as recorded by others in his time—indicate that he must have had plenty of charisma, to the point of leaving spectators gawking open-mouthed in astonishment when he was done speaking.

Aristotle, who wrote the first "textbook" on public speaking, *The Rhetoric*, defined rhetoric as "all available means of persuasion." In his book, he presented three methods of persuasion: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. *Ethos* was persuading another by appealing to the trustworthy character of the speaker; *pathos* consisted of engaging the emotions of the audience; and *logos* was the use of argument and reasoning. For Aristotle, rhetoric was the process of developing persuasive arguments, whereas oratory is the process of delivering those arguments.

Fig. 36 Cicero

Much later, the Romans considered the great statesman and orator Cicero (106–46 BCE) to be the true embodiment of the ideal rhetorician. He considered rhetoric a type of dramatic performance, in which judgement is

made possible by the roles assumed by the speaker and the audience. Here the word "judgement" is key to understanding the basic difference between rhetoric and hypnosis, as it indicates the conscious ability to choose and the place of critical thinking in rhetoric which is entirely absent when hypnosis is involved.

The Story of Antiphon—The Town Hypnotherapist Sets Up Shop

"When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."

—Hunter S. Thompson, 1974

Before we proceed, it should be noted that there is no way at present to know whether the following accounts were really true or not; but even if some are indeed fictional, they would still be of value to us as they more than likely represent the types of trance situations encountered in ancient times. So, it's best to take these examples with a grain of salt, as it were, and consider them provisionally informative…

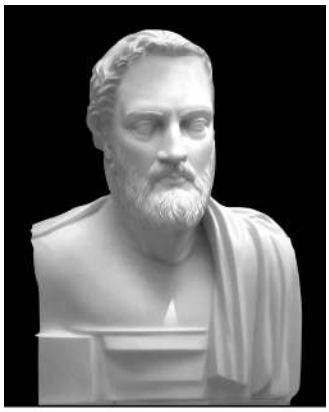

Fig. 37 Antiphon

Antiphon of Rhamnus (c.480-411 BCE) was a professional legal speech writer in Athens. His extraordinary powers of persuasion could supposedly convince anyone of anything, regardless of the topic or the position taken (a useful skill for a hypnotist). This ability earned him the nickname "Nestor" (Nestor was a long-winded but wise advisor who appears in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.) Antiphon was eventually condemned to death by the restored Athenian democracy, for his part in the

coup committed by oligarchs ("the 400") against the democratic government there. We know his story because he is mentioned by both Plutarch (c.46 CE – c.120 CE) in Book I of his Lives of the Ten Orators, and Flavius Philostratus (c.170 CE – 250 CE) in his *Lives of the Philosophers.*[45]

Before Antiphon became a speech writer, he tried his hand at healing, although he was not a physician. This is our main focus of interest here:

"But while he was still busy with poetry, he [Antiphon] invented a method of curing distress, just as physicians have a treatment for those who are ill; and at Corinth, fitting up a room near the market-place, he wrote on the door that he could cure by words those who were in distress; and by asking questions and finding out the causes of their condition he consoled those in trouble."

—Plutarch, *Moralia* 833C-d

This sounds very much like therapeutic hypnosis. Antiphon also presented a course of "sorrow-assuaging" lectures for the locals in Corinth, proclaiming "no one could tell him of a grief so terrible *that he could not expel it from the mind.*"[46] (Even today, successful hypnotherapists often recruit new clients by giving public lectures and demonstrations).

Antiphon eventually abandoned this endeavor, deeming it unworthy of him, only to become the master of the legal and political speechwriting he was famous for afterwards.

From the little information these ancient authors have provided about him, we have several reasons to believe that Antiphon, the master of oratorical persuasion, "invented" (in Plutarch's words) some useful hypnotic techniques which he then put into practice for psychological healing. Apparently, he was so amazed by the results of his newfound method that he became supremely confident that there were no psychological problems he couldn't fix; in fact, he was confident enough to open up his own shop downtown and hang a sign out for everyone to see...

Antiphon's claim that he could "cure by words" by asking patients

questions in order to discover the causes behind their conditions, sounds a lot like modern psychiatry and other "talk therapies;" yet it's likely that there was more going on here than that. That Antiphon had developed considerable persuasive skills even before taking up a profession in oratory, suggests that he found a way to use those selfsame rhetorical abilities to persuade his patients into becoming cured.

But what kind of technique is capable of just *persuading* people to be cured? Emotional distress and psychosomatic illnesses are pretty much immune from being alleviated simply by using rational arguments in conversations with patients. The hidden real reasons behind a patient's suffering are typically irrational, subconscious, or both. So one can't rely on just trying to "talk someone into" being healed, especially in the sense that Antiphon claimed to be able to do; unless, that is, *the patient is in hypnosis and susceptible to suggestions that will make healing happen.* This would allow the patient to mentally go back in time in order to vividly re-experience life events, which in turn would allow him or her to discover the real origins of their problem and then, hopefully, resolve it using that new information. It bypasses the fact that the patient's conscious mind does not understand the roots of the problems, or lacks the power to fix it.

Once Antiphon found out the causes behind his patients' mental ailments, then what? Simply talking a wide-awake patient into being healed is unlikely. But as the great hypnotist Milton Erickson (re)discovered, hypnotic language used in everyday speech can be both highly persuasive, and put people into trance where therapeutic change can happen. Erickson was known for his ability to conversationally hypnotize and persuade individuals and groups *without them realizing any hypnosis had been done.* Methods of conversational hypnosis Erickson developed are now widely used for both therapy and persuasion. He indeed did talk his patients out of their psychological ailments *while they were in a hypnotic trance state.*

Hypnotic Healing Techniques in Ancient Greece

The surviving evidence for ancient medical hypnosis is unusually good. The ancient Greeks used several forms of hypnosis for healing. While the

next chapter will examine the famous healing temples of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, here we will explore other hypnotic methods used by the ancient Greeks.

The oldest surviving references to Greek healing techniques that employ the use of hypnotic features come from descriptions found among the works of Homer (c.800 BCE), so it's fitting that we begin this part of our inquiry here…

Emergency and battlefield hypnosis

In the Odyssey, Odysseus is badly gored by a wild boar. What do his companions do?

"The sons of Autolycus busied themselves with the carcass of the boar, and bound flawless godlike Odysseus' wound; then, after saying a spell to stop the dark blood, they went home as fast as they could."

—*Odyssey* 19.455–7

Here, incantations chanted over the wounded Odysseus were used to stop his bleeding. The Greeks called a song that acted as a spell to heal or relieve pain an *epode*. The person singing the healing incantations (who was sometimes a professional) was called an *epodos* ("one who sings over").

Although incantations were always a fundamental part of Greek magic, an epodos was probably not originally so much a magician, as he was someone who specialized in singing over the sick and wounded to cure and soothe them, and to relieve their pain and suffering. (Music itself has hypnotic effects we'll examine later in the appendices devoted to that topic).

The main concern for treating a wounded soldier during wartime was to stop any bleeding, blood loss being the major reason soldiers died from their injuries. Although in this case Odysseus was gored by a wild boar rather than wounded in battle, his friends were able to stop his bleeding by chanting healing incantations over his wound. Could this really have been

possible? *It turns out that not only is it possible, but hypnotic techniques are regularly taught in first-responder courses for precisely that reason.*

Trauma is defined as "a disordered psychic or behavioral state." If that smells like some kind of trance to you, you're absolutely correct. People suffering from severe physical trauma *are already in a highly focused trance state*— totally focused on the intense pain they are experiencing, not to mention the fear of death and dying that often accompanies it. They are in what hypnotists call "shock hypnosis." Shock hypnosis is probably more akin to hyperempiria than to regular hypnosis (which most often involves relaxation rather than the kind of manic, existential terror experienced by accident victims and wounded soldiers). The first tell-tale sign is extreme redness of the eyes, also a characteristic feature of someone in or just emerging from hypnosis.

Shock hypnosis makes things much easier for a hypnotist first responder, since there is no need for a formal hypnotic induction. *Trauma victims are already in a profound state of trance,* making them immediately suggestible to direct hypnotic commands. Possibly the main challenge for the responding hypnotist is to shift the attention of the injured persons from their condition to focus on the sound of his or her voice. Once that happens, the hypnotist can "hijack" the already present trance state, transforming it in ways that allow the injured person to accept suggestions for healing and pain relief.

According to renowned hypnotist and trainer Jerry Kein, emergency hypnosis techniques can stop bleeding, prevent victims from going into shock, and reduce or eliminate pain. Hypnosis is also useful for reducing their fear and anxiety by saying something soothing like: "I'm here to help you, the worst is over…"[47]

Aside from stopping bleeding, hypnosis can come in handy in an accident or emergency as it can be used (among other things) to reduce burn severity (if intervention occurs within the first hour); reduce or eliminate pain; prevent injured people from going into shock (or help to get them out of shock); and swiftly calm those who are undergoing anxiety attacks as a result of their traumas.[48]

Thus, what appears to modern eyes to be a lame effort on the part of the ancient Greeks to help or heal an injured person in trauma by simply singing over the wounded, turns out to be "just what the doctor ordered": an effective way to utilize the injured person's trance state to produce healing. The incantations chanted by the *epodos* provided suggestions capable of really helping someone injured and in pain.

CHAPTER
15

CHAPTER 15: Psychological Phenomena—Hearing Voices and the Archaic Self

As the title of this book suggests, here and in the following two volumes we will stop now and then to explore aspects of psychological phenomena that occurred in the ancient world, as they still do today. The reason for this is that even though exactly the same phenomena happen to people now as happened to them then, the ways they were and are interpreted, then and now, might be radically different. In this case, we're concerned with the phenomenon of people who hear voices in their heads *that seem not to be their own.*

Psychological Phenomena: Hearing Voices

How many ancient texts, wall reliefs, and personal testimonies are there in which a pharaoh, king, priest or someone else recounts hearing the voice of a god or goddess tell them this or that? Our first impulse is to naturally assume that "They're just making that up to impress the ignorant," or "They're just saying that to convince others how much the gods love them and endorse their power to rule." We can't believe that such things could really have been true because, after all, none of those gods or goddesses ever really existed at all; so we automatically conclude that the ancients saying such things were insane, lying, or making it all up for some selfish purpose of their own (like trying to impress or appear devout).

Proof of our modern attitude concerning hearing voices lies in the fact that, in most modern Western countries, anyone who lets others know that he or she hears voices is in immediate danger of being arrested and sent to a psychiatric facility to be held for observation.

And yet, almost all of us *do* happen to hear a voice in our head—*our own internal voice* with which we carry on a constant monologue, from the time we wake up until we fall asleep. This is an important feature of our conscious minds that dominates our reality while we are awake, and doesn't shut the hell up until after we've finally fallen asleep when our relatively silent subconscious minds

take over. A major concern of many religions and spiritual disciplines over the centuries has been to find methods to silence this yakkity-yak inner voice while we're awake.

There is currently a stigma attached to hearing voices in most modern industrialized countries. Hearing voices is commonly seen as a symptom of deep and possibly dangerous psychological issues, if not full-blown schizophrenia. Indeed, occasional news stories describe a mother who heard voices telling her to murder her children, which she then did. Such unfortunate and sick people are rarely sent to prison, but are usually given a life sentence at a state psychiatric facility. Why? It's because they were considered to have been insane at the time of their crimes. In other words, hearing voices equals insanity.

But we would be very wrong to project onto ancient cultures the modern negative attitudes about hearing voices that we take for granted; because in the case of at least some (if not many) ancient testimonies about the voices of gods or goddesses, *they honestly believed that t hey were hearing them* , and maybe they even went on to carry on conversations with them. So, when it comes to examining the phenomenon of hearing voices as it was perceived in antiquity, it's best to leave our modern biases behind and, at least initially, *take their claims seriously.*

Most or all of us have at some time heard the voice of our mother calling us when we knew she was far away, or even long-deceased. Interestingly, there are more people who hear voices in modern times than one might think,

apparently enough to organize an International Hearing Voices Movement dedicated to promoting better ways to perceive and treat those who live with audio hallucinations and voices they hear in their heads. It has been estimated that 5%-15% of adults have heard voices in their heads, with 4% hearing them regularly .[49]

According to research findings, most of the voices people hear in their heads are male; and their temperament can seem different depending on the culture: in the United States voices are harsh and threatening as opposed to voices heard by those living in Africa and India, which are more benign and playful.[50]

These voices are obviously endogenous and self-generated; and although people who heard voices in antiquity were not really hearing the voice of a god coming from outside of them, they did "hear" voices that sounded *as though* they came from outside. Although ultimately hallucinated, the consequences of such communications experienced by those in power could have a very real influence on how they ruled, and therefore on the society and culture at large.

There have been theories put forward as to why this happens to people. One theory explored by neuroscientist David Eagleman is that it may be due to a phenomenon called “credit misattribution,” whereby the voice hearer doesn’t believe he or she is responsible for what they are hearing. This is due to a delay between our internal dialogue voice and the moment when we hear what we have said, the result of which is that we no longer recognize it as something we said to ourselves.[51] However, this doesn’t seem to do much to explain those who hear multiple voices, or voices that sound different from their own interior voice.

Fortunately, many people that hear voices are not disturbed by their presence. In fact, many people are used to them, and may even regard them as beneficial for various reasons; though these same people tend keep a low profile because of the social stigma attached to hearing voices, and as a result many of them may never reveal their existence to others. Thus, the actual percentage of people dealing with this phenomenon may be much higher due to gross underreporting.

Hallucinated voices in stage hypnotism

Hallucinated voices are routinely created by modern stage hypnotists and incorporated into comedic skits during shows.A popular skit is telling the hypnotized volunteers onstage that one of their shoes is actually a cell phone, and that they must answer it now because it is ringing. The hilarious result is watching everyone onstage conduct ongoing conversations with some imaginary person on the other end, all while holding one of their shoes to their ear like it was a real functioning phone.

The funny part comes when the hypnotist asks each volunteer who they were speaking to and what they were talking about—they spontaneously confabulate answers delivered so sincerely that they would sound pretty convincing in any other circumstances. One volunteer might tell the hypnotist he was talking to his dad; the next might say she was having a conversation with her boyfriend, Tom Cruise. And so on…

In another skit, the hypnotist tells his onstage subjects that the *toe* of the person sitting next to them is talking dirty. Then the audience watches the reactions of the hypnotized volunteers when they hallucinate words coming from the impolite foot. More fun comes when the hypnotist asks them what's going on, and they individually report what that nasty toe was saying to them (again, all confabulated on the fly with convincing sincerity).

The ancient use of ventriloquism for prophecy, and for faking the voices of gods, spirits, and the dead, is well-documented; but with hypnosis, subjects could have been induced to hallucinate virtually anybody saying virtually anything, including gods and goddesses.

Julian Jaynes and the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind

Although hearing voices is popularly regarded as an aberration in modern societies, Julian Jaynes proposed that in ancient times, hearing voices was not only *not* considered an abnormality but normal and desirable, if not necessary for a functioning member of society! In such a case, it would have been those *unable* to hear voices in their heads who would have been regarded as outsiders and considered abnormal.

In his popular book, *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976), Jaynes posited that the brain's two hemispheres (the bicameral mind) were arranged such that the thoughts of the right hemisphere were transmitted to the left hemisphere *by way of audio hallucinations*. Instead of consciously analyzing what to do when an unexpected situation was encountered, as one of us might do today, an ancient person would hallucinate a god's voice commanding them what to do (or not do), which the person would then obey without question.

According to Jaynes, this entire process occurred beyond the ancients' conscious awareness and scrutiny; and he extrapolates from his theory the mechanism behind the behaviors observed in schizophrenics, and those voice hearers who experience similar types of "command hallucinations"—that they are atavisms from a more primitive time in the history of human mental behavior when this phenomenon was considered normal.

As evidence for his theory, Jaynes points out that characters in the *Iliad* (700 BCE) do not really think for themselves or introspect about their situations; rather, it is left up to the gods who intervene now and then throughout the story to ultimately guide their decisions for them. According to Jaynes, the breakdown of the bicameral mind and the mental processes it used for decision making took place around the time of the Bronze Age collapse of the second millennium BCE, when the demands of dealing with the massive cultural disruptions of the time exceeded the bicameral mind's ability to adapt. As a result, modern forms of "consciousness" and self-awareness developed as a culturally evolved solution to problem-solving in a more complex world. The arts of divination, prayer, and oracles that permeated the Greek and Roman world were, according to Jaynes, attempts

to “recapture” the divine guidance that was once provided by the hallucinated voices of gods but had grown silent.

In the end, it seems that Jaynes himself no longer believed in his own theory by the time he passed away, yet the popularity of his theory has persisted, if only as a novelty. Some totally dismissed his arguments while others thought he had indeed stumbled on something important, particularly the idea that hearing voices may have been the rule and not the exception before the development of our modern mentality just a few millennia ago. There are, of course, many cultural counterexamples put forward that seem to defy his hypothesis, including the fact that anthropologists working on six continents have so far failed to find even one culture operating according to externally heard voices as the norm; so, Jaynes' ideas remain highly fringy and controversial. Yet considering that his topic is human consciousness itself—about which there remains even now little or no consensus—he is most often admired for creative and bold ideas that are still talked about to this day.

Peculiarities of Archaic Concepts of Self in Homer

Homer’s *Iliad* is an ancient Greek epic whose written form dates from approximately 700 BCE. The mental behavior of its characters has been analyzed by numerous scholars, with some surprising results —m any differences from the kinds of psychological characteristics we now take for granted have been identified. These suggest things about the mental life of the ancient Greeks that are somewhat mystifying to modern sensibilities; and since many people simply assume that people in ancient times thought about themselves pretty much as we do now, it is worth briefly listing some of these differences.

There are no words in Homeric Greek for sensation, cognition, perception, and memory; rather, mental activities are identified with the functions of the various organs, with a distinct lack of any sense of a unitary self of the kind we are used to describing in our own languages. There is no word that can be translated as “to see,” and instead Homer uses “to glare at” and “to notice”—aspects of vision *that are observable to others.* There is no word that can be translated as “body,” neither are there any words for

“person” or “oneself.” The origins of characters’ mental states are ascribed to forces of agency outside of the person; and strength and courage often appear to come from the gods.

Typically, Homer talks about one part of the body doing something to the whole; and the classical scholar Hermann Frankel views “Homeric man not as an ‘I,’ an ego, a closed and private entity, but rather as an ‘open force field,’ having no structural bounds that would help separate it and insulate it from the effects of forces all around it.”[52] Instead of a coherent concept of self, there is a collection of parts and limbs that move and act as a whole.

It seems that the ancient Egyptians had similar concepts about the body, with each part having its own god or goddess.[53] As we mentioned before, in early Egypt the only mortal possessing a “self” worthy of an afterlife was the pharaoh, though the idea of "personhood" was eventually expanded over time to include all Egyptians. One of the more interesting speculations put forth by Jeremy Naydler in *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, was that the many initiatory experiences intended just for the king were performed *so as to enable him to possess what we would now consider a “normal” sense of self.* All of his subjects (at least during Egypt's Old Kingdom) had no hope of persisting in the afterlife with any sense of self; and, indeed, their entire existences were subsumed within that of the unique and all-important divine king.

Can You Hear Me Now?

One of Julian Jaynes’s ideas was that towns and cities (particularly in early Mesopotamia) had large and centrally-located statues of gods and goddesses to serve as the focus of the voices they “heard” emanating from these images. Perhaps Jaynes was partially correct; perhaps the “animation of statues”—whatever that was—in ancient Egypt had something to do with bicameral minds hallucinating the voices of their gods coming directly from their statues (during the time before automatons and hidden mechanisms were used).

Pictured here is an artifact found buried with Meresamun—a priestess of Amun. According to the article about her mummy and its contents

Fig. 38 Drawing of Priestess's "cell phone" to

published in Archaeology Magazine: "Egyptian women could practice religion anywhere. This pocket-sized stele allowed direct contact with the gods. It was held to the ear and spoken into, like an ancient cell phone."[54]

By installing posthypnotic suggestions, a hypnotist can get a subject to hallucinate voices even after hypnosis ends; but whether the ancients used such tricks is unknown. It seems very likely that Meresamun did hear the voices of the gods coming from her stone "cell phone;" and I'm sure that the irony of this interesting analog to modern cell phones, and the way they seem to be practically stuck to the side of the heads of many modern women (and men too) as they go through their day, has not been lost on the reader…

CHAPTER
16

CHAPTER 16: Ancient Religious Initiatory Texts as Hypnotic Scripts

"Once, when thought came to me of the things that are and *my thinking soared high and my bodily senses were restrained*, like someone heavy with sleep from too much eating or toil of the body, an enormous being completely unbounded in size seemed to appear to me and call my name..."

—*The Divine Poimandres,* Book I, section 1 (italics added)

"The Divine Poimandres": An ancient initiatory Ultra Height induction

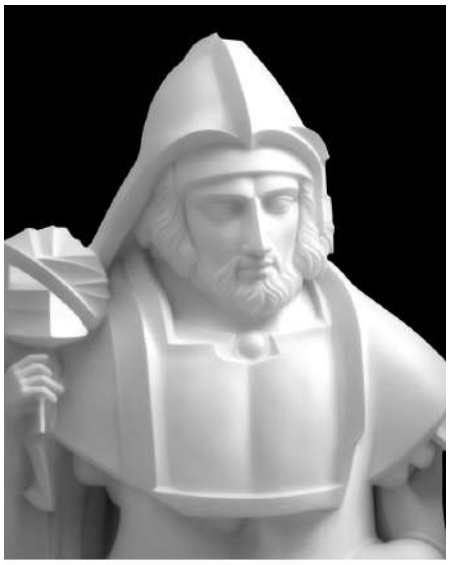

Fig. 39 Hermes

One of the most influential of the ancient pagan works that have come down to us, whose importance continues to resonate in Western culture, is the Hermetic text called “The Divine Poimandres.” It is the first and most famous surviving work in the Corpus Hermeticum, a collection of 17–18 Hermetic books—mystical dialogues about the true nature of God and the universe—which were probably written in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt during the 1st-3rd centuries CE.

These texts have been familiar in the West since the Renaissance as sources for the initiation of Hermetic aspirants into a higher level of spiritual knowledge; and the story of the "Poimandres" is itself about the initiation of its protagonist, Hermes Trismegistus, by a giant dragon named Poimandres. Poimandres (sometimes called Pymander or Pimander) is described as "the Mind of the Sovereignty," meaning the *nous* (mind) of the Supreme Being.

What is new about the "Poimandres" for our purposes here is that it is perhaps the most obvious example of an ancient religious text that served as a trance-induction script for initiation—specifically, it seems, the exotic trance state we've previously covered called *Ultra Height*. Initiations were

secret rites designed and conducted to give qualified cult members the lessons and knowledge they needed to advance to the next level in the cult's spiritual hierarchy. They were designed to be profound and memorable ordeals whereby initiates would *directly experience* the revelation of the secret knowledge or information necessary for their spiritual progress, rather than merely being told such things as one would receive during a lesson.

The optimum method for initiates to achieve the desired experience would have been some form of hypnosis or trance; this is because *what is visualized in trance can be perceived as being "more real than real,"* afterwards due to the additional emotional impact and sense of existential importance attached to it by the initiate anticipating the experience.

Visions that are vividly imagined during trance can seem just as real, or even more so, than something someone has actually experienced in reality.

Especially notable for our purposes is that in several places within the "Poimandres" text, there are hints that Hermes Trismegistus was experiencing the exotic trance state of Ultra Height described earlier. This best fits with the modus operandi hinted at in the first quote above, i.e., "*my thinking soared high and my bodily senses were restrained*."

As you may recall, Ultra Height is an exotic trance state similar to somnambulism, but with a trance induction that instructs subjects to let their minds “soar higher” as their bodies “go deeper.” The result is a trance state very amenable to the experience of “metaphysical-type” phenomena, which have all the trappings of a profound religious epiphany. It is, in fact, the self-admission by Hermes himself, at the very beginning of this text, that he was under the influence of Ultra Height (or some trance state very much like it) that sets the foundation for the entire story.

Fig. 40 Egyptian god Thoth

Here is some background about Hermeticism and "gnosis" necessary for understanding our present topic: The intention of this text as an induction was to lead the aspirant, guided by the holy dragon Poimandres, to a higher divine state called *gnosis* (knowledge). In it, Hermes himself is presented as a model initiate for the reception of spiritual truths given by Poimandres, the "Mind of God." Along with other Hermetic texts, they were put forward as the written dialogues of Egyptian gods personified as their Greco-Roman counterparts. Greek texts referring to Egyptian gods commonly used the names of their Greek equivalents rather than their native Egyptian names; and Hermes Trismegistus (also known as Thrice-Greatest Hermes) was characterized as the Hellenized version of the ibis-headed god of knowledge, Thoth (called "Djehuti" by the Egyptians). In other Hermetic dialogues, the name of Asclepius also appears; but he is not like the Greek god of the same name, nor is he portrayed as his Egyptian equivalent, Imhotep. Rather he, and another figure named Tat, play the part of students asking questions of Hermes.

But if Hermes is being portrayed as the Egyptian god Thoth, it is not

certain who the initiating character Poimandres might represent among the Egyptian gods. He might, however, possibly be Ra, given that the name "Poimandres"—which was for a long time mistranslated as "Man Shepherd"—has since been thought to have been derived from the Egyptian phrase "Peime-nete-re" meaning "knowledge of Ra."

Gnosis and Gnosticism

Gnosis was a state of enlightenment regarding the esoteric spiritual truths that were essential to salvation. Gnostics claimed that this ultimate spiritual attainment could be accomplished through direct experience (*gnosis*, or "knowing") of God. As such, Gnosticism can be understood as more of an approach to religious experience, than a separate religion *per se*. Practices in any religion that utilize the path of direct knowledge — as opposed to other paths (such as *pistis* or "faith")— can be characterized as Gnostic; and the Greco-Roman world had both Jewish gnostic and Christian gnostic sects. Generally speaking, the achievement of the state of *gnosis* was considered the spiritual goal for both Gnostic and Hermetic adepts, much as Buddhists seek nirvana or pious Hindus seek union with the self (*atman*).

Gnostic doctrine posits two gods, the inferior and arrogant creator god, also known as the "demiurge" or "craftsman" (identified with the God of the Old Testament), and a transcendent god above him of whom the demiurge is entirely ignorant. The demiurge imprisons human souls in matter, and rules over them as a fickle, if not evil, tyrant. This means that, for them, the material world acts as a virtual prison for humankind. In the Christian Gnostic scheme, the transcendent god or *logos* sends Christ to liberate humankind from the imprisonment of the demiurge by offering them a way out in the form of gnosis.

Some maintain that the earliest Christians were in fact Gnostics whose teachings went back to Jesus himself; but that they were eventually purged and all but eliminated once the emperor Constantine declared the Catholic Church to be the only acceptable brand of Christianity. Gnostics then survived underground here and there for centuries, with the Mandaeans living in modern day Israel (who venerate John the Baptist instead of Jesus)

being the only current surviving Gnostic religion today.

Hermeticism vs. Gnosticism

Although Hermeticism shares many elements with Gnosticism (including the goal of achieving gnosis), it is more "Gnostic-like" than Gnostic *per se*. We will be covering Gnosticism and hypnosis later on in Volume III, but it's useful to point out here that there are a few major differences between the two religious philosophies. For one, in the Hermetic cosmic paradigm the demiurge is wise and knowing; so, for those who followed it the earth was *not* regarded as an evil prison meant to prevent humans from escaping. Another major difference is that Hermeticism regarded astrology and alchemy as helpful for remembering our divine origins , because they encouraged the Hermetic adept to acquire the craftsman's knowledge of creation. Such were perhaps the main aspects of Hermeticism, which went on to resonate throughout history to inspire science and exploration well into Renaissance times. In contrast, Gnostics regarded the heavenly bodies as obstacles hindering humankind's transcendence from matter, and the world as a prison in service of a demiurgic slave master.

So, nature played a prominent and relatively positive role for followers of Hermes Trismegistus—the Hermetic God was omnipresent throughout creation, whereas for Gnostics he was transcendent and the world was an evil place created by a lesser demiurgic god. Hermetic texts *celebrated the divine within the world*, the Gnostics just wanted to find ways to escape it.

"…an enormous being completely unbounded in size seemed to appear to me and call my name and say to me: 'What do you want to hear and see; what do you want to learn and know from your understanding?' 'Who are you?' I asked. 'I am Poimandres,' he said, 'mind of sovereignty; I know what you want, and I am with you everywhere.'"

—*The Divine Poimandres,* Book I, lines 1 and 2

Poimandres: nature of the text

With the exception of some content found in Egyptian "Wisdom Texts" that have survived from before the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE, the dialogues presented in the philosophical books of Hermes bear little resemblance to the ancient Egyptian religious writings preceding them. What is clear, however, is that the content of the Hermetic works was heavily influenced by the dialogue format used much earlier by Plato. More than likely, the cachet of ancient authority attributed to the ancient Egyptians by the Greeks and Romans was used by the Hellenistic writers of the Hermetic texts to fabricate a pedigree for their works going all the way back to the beginnings of ancient Egyptian religion; though some scholars disagree with this assertion, alleging that the content of the Hermetic texts was drawn directly from much more ancient Egyptian religious literature.

"I long to learn the things that are, and comprehend their nature, and know God. This is, I said, what I desire to hear."

"He answered back to me: 'Hold in thy mind all thou wouldst know, and I will teach thee.'"

—Hermes Trismegistus, *The Divine Poimandres,* Book I, line 3

In this book of Hermes, Poimandres plays the part of initiator and Hermes that of the awe-struck, knowledge-hungry initiate. It would make sense, then, that the initiating priest would have impersonated the character and voice of Poimandres during the initiate's trance experience.

"And speaking thus He gazed for long into my eyes, so that I trembled at the look of Him."

—Hermes Trismegistus, *The Divine Poimandres,* Book I, 7

In this quote, we may be seeing a preserved reference to one of the hypnotic techniques actually used by the presiding priest (in his role of Poimandres) during the initiation—eye fixation. The best modern analog to this situation would be an intimate one-on-one clinical type of hypnosis session, rather than the kinds of public performances (which will be examined in later volumes) that were more akin to modern stage hypnotism shows.

"…with these words His aspect changed, and straightway, in the twinkling of an eye, all things were opened to me, and I see a vision limitless, all things turned into light—sweet, joyous [Light]. And I became transported as I gazed."

—*The Divine Poimandres,* Book I, 4

Poimandres then goes on to reveal the Hermetic story of the creation of the universe, and of all living animals as well as humans (in God's image). After that, Hermes is shown how the male-female creatures were divided into male and female; and finally, Poimandres explains how he grants those who remain pure and worthy divine gnosis, allowing them to become one with God after death.

Somewhat comically, while explaining these things Poimandres has to tell the eager Hermes a few times to just shut up and listen. At the end, Hermes agrees to spread the word and offers multiple praises to the Father-God.

A script to induce initiatory visions using guided imagery

In modern parlance, this kind of induction is called "guided imagery" or "guided meditation." Unfortunately, it is often called by that name to cover up the fact that it is actually a type of hypnosis, without having to use that "scary" term.[55]

As with other texts that describe the visions of initiates, the initiator (here Poimandres) acts as a kind of tour guide, giving the initiate a V.I.P. tour of the cosmos and its mysteries. Hermetic initiatory texts differed according to the particular celestial regions they were targeting; these might be the seven planetary spheres, the twelve zodiacal houses, or entirely different and higher levels like the eighth heaven beyond the planets or even a ninth heaven beyond that.[56]

A key feature of the efficacy of initiatory inductions that use hypnotic guided imagery is this (which you'll find repeated over and over throughout all three volumes): *that the subconscious mind does not distinguish between our experiences in reality and what we experience vividly with our imaginations*. This lack of discrimination is what allows the images suggested to us to merge with, become, and eventually replace our experienced reality; and their success is directly proportional to the intensity of the emotional and sensory input serving to vivify these imaginary experiences in our minds. In other words, what is vividly imagined during trance becomes installed as *false memories*, with all the feelings of reality that characterize real ones.

There are also non-Hermetic texts that use similar guided imagery, in which the initiate may be led on a trip through the hole at the celestial pole to the realm on the other side of the stellar dome, or on a tour of Hades, or receive some other privileged vision of the afterlife or netherworld. This type of sacred vision recurs throughout Greco-Roman literature (Plutarch's *Vision of Aridaeus* and Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* for example); but whether they were used at some point or in some form as hypnotic initiatory texts is, though possible, as yet unknown (though they certainly seem to have been suitable for that purpose). Although no longer used to provide initiates with initiation experiences, this particular literary tradition lived on far beyond the ancient world to reappear again in works such as Dante's

Divine Comedy .

In the Hermetic accounts, Hermes receives suggestions (in the form of visualized revelations) from Poimandres, who appears to him while he is in a trance state similar to Ultra Height. Although in the story it is Hermes Trismegistus who is transformed in this induction, the true value of the text is to serve as a model for the ritual initiation to be experienced by Hermetic aspirants. The use of a trance state like Ultra Height during this experience would have allowed the initiate to be given hypnotic suggestions that changed their belief system and allowed them to embrace the new behaviors the initiators wished to install; this would include whatever experiences and beliefs the initiators felt were necessary to enable the initiate to experience what they believed to be a state of gnosis.

“For body’s sleep became the soul’s awakening, and closing of the eyes—true vision, pregnant with Good my silence, and the utterance of my word (*logos*) begetting of good things.”

—*The Divine Poimandres,* Book I, 30

The above quote again points to Hermes (or the initiate) being in a hypnotic state, if not Ultra Height. His eyes are closed, much as hypnotherapists nowadays inevitably ask their subjects to close their eyes during a session before proceeding to the hypnotic induction. Furthermore, he refers to the “body’s sleep” becoming “the soul’s awakening”—a characteristic of Ultra Height, during which subjects are told that their bodies will "go deeper" while their minds split off the other way and "go higher." This statement echoes the one quoted from the very beginning of the story, reinforcing the idea that he was in Ultra Height, or a trance state very much like it.

In the end, a person’s ability to attain spiritual progress by way of initiation may have ultimately depended on the candidate’s degree of hypnotic suggestibility, more than many other reasons.

Since whether the initiate had the desired initiatory experience or not depended on his or her ability to go into trance and vividly "live" what was happening *as though* it were real, the “worthy” (i.e., the successful

responders) may have been synonymous with those who were “suitably hypnotically suggestible.” In their world, a person’s inability to have this experience, and their failure to be properly initiated, would not have been attributed by them to their individual lack of suggestibility. Most likely participants would think it was instead due to some shortcoming on their part—that they were unworthy, or perhaps somehow not yet ready to receive the revelations, or so on.

An inspiration for scientific research and free thought

For the Renaissance thinkers who were finally able to acquire copies of lost Hermetic texts after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the liberating message that humanity is capable, through gnosis, of apprehending all the mysteries of the universe and eventually becoming one with God generated enthusiasm for a revival of Hermetic and Neo-platonic thought. In turn, the Hermetic texts encouraged Europeans to go ahead and discover the secrets of the demiurgic architect's universe. This offered a positive approach—new and refreshing for the time—toward the accumulation of knowledge, in contrast to the religious restraints and taboos imposed by Christian doctrine up to that time which had generally discouraged meddling with the natural world as the work of the Devil. Renaissance Hermeticism's encouragement to go ahead and freely plumb the limitless depths of reality contributed much to inspire subsequent scientific exploration and research, the results of which are still with us today.

The Mithras Liturgy

Another ancient initiatory text that very much appears to be a hypnotic induction is the Mithras Liturgy, which is part of the great magical codex of Paris (Papyrus 574 of the Bibliotheque Nationale, also known as PGM 4). It was probably compiled along with various recipes, prayers, and prescriptions in the early fourth century C.E., as it seems to have been part

of an Egyptian magician's library. The text itself is found interposed between two closely related versions of spells utilizing lines from Homer.

Although it is not labeled as such in the papyri, it was named "The Mithras Liturgy" by the scholar A. Dietrich who, in 1903, proposed it was an official liturgy of the Mithras cult. The text calls itself an "immortalizer" (meaning it claimed to make the person using it immortal), making it unique among the Greek magical papyri (which will be covered in depth in Volume II).

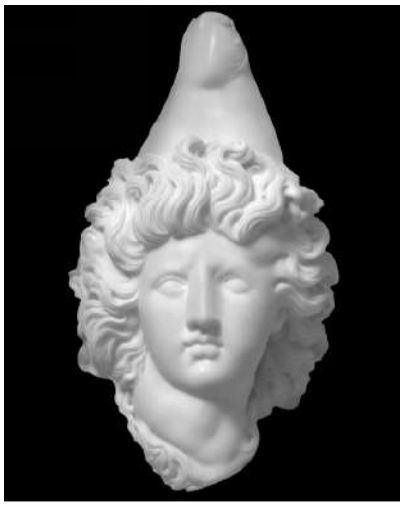

Fig. 41 Mithras

Though Mithras was originally the god of the sun, justice and war in pre-Zoroastrian Persia, a new cult centered around him spread throughout the Roman world during the second and third centuries CE. Although originally inspired by his worship in Persia, it took on a life of its own as the quintessential mystery cult for members of the Roman military. There were seven grades of initiation, and the cult had many of the features of a secret society similar to modern freemasonry.

Although a great many archaeological artifacts have been preserved from the Mithras cult (including entire *mithraeums*, its places of worship), we know almost nothing about their religious texts. Though it appears to be somewhat Egyptianized and might not be representative of what one might expect a Mithraic text to look like, this particular text is one of the few extant to provide a glimpse into their beliefs.

Upon examination, the text seems to deviate from what most would consider purely Mithraic; and given its parallels with Hermetic texts (such

Fig. 42 Mithras Slaying the Sacred Bull

as the *Poimandres* above) and the Egyptian elements found within it, it has since been characterized as possibly belonging to a Greco-Egyptian version of Mithraism on the fringes of the cult as it was practiced across the Roman world. Yet it seems to have all the features one would expect in a Mithraic text: "the great god Helios Mithras," mention of the fire-breathing god Aion, portraits of Helios and the highest God, to name a few.[57]

It will be useful here to provide a very brief overview of this cult, which was at one time very popular and a serious competitor to early Christianity.

Fig. 43

As mentioned, we have little to nothing in the way of writings to inform us of their beliefs and practices; but there are lots of iconographic artifacts in the form of sculptures and reliefs that reveal things about Mithras and his cult. One of these is Mithras' birth from a rock; but he is most commonly depicted in the act of killing of the sacred bull, an act called the "tauroctony" in Greek. This was the final scene of a drama in which he hunted the bull, rode it, subdued it, and finally took it to a cave to slaughter it. But the second-most important scene after the tauroctony is the banquet

where Mithras is shown sharing parts of the bull with the sun god Sol, after which he ascends to heaven in a chariot.

One mysterious figure shows up prominently in Mithraic art and statuary, the naked lion-headed god with wings and a serpent wrapped around its body (called the “leontocephaline”). Nobody is really sure what it means, but most scholars agree that the lion-man represents the “Aion” or the god Cronus, who symbolizes time.

All members of the cult were male. Feasting and taking sacred meals together seem to have been a major act of worship for the cult, the model for which was the celebration feast of Mithras with the sun god Sol after his slaughter of the bull. Much of the mythic symbolism of Mithras was astrological in nature—the bull symbolized the constellation Taurus, while some speculate that Mithras symbolized the constellation Perseus next to it. Others think that the bull was the constellation of Ursa Major ("the Great Bear"), which the Egyptians called the Bull or the Bull’s Foreleg; and still others think he did not represent any particular constellation, but was rather a symbol of the unconquerable sun (Helios or Sol Invictus).

The Mithras cult was viciously persecuted by the Christians upon their rise to power; and it finally came to an end with the anti-pagan decrees of the emperor Theodosius at the end of the fourth century CE. In modern times, many *mithraeums* have been found buried under churches that were built on top of them, no doubt to symbolize Christianity's domination over its once-popular and widespread competitor.

The reader will recall how, in the *Poimandres*, hypnosis in the form of guided imagery gave the initiate Hermes a V.I.P. tour of the cosmos. Here, in the Mithras Liturgy, we find something very similar except that in the place of the “tour guide” portrayed by Poimandres, it is the initiator who provides the imaginal descriptions from the liturgy that serve to bring aspects of the ascent into view for the initiate as they happen (i.e., the initiator, while reading the liturgy, serves as the hypnotist/tour guide). The liturgy has two main parts: a liturgical mystery of ascent, and instructions for the use of the mystery. During this mystery, the initiate ascends through the four elements to become a star. Visions of the cosmos are seen—climaxing with the appearance of Helios Mithras—granting the initiate immortality.

For our particular purposes here, it will be useful to take note of the parts of this liturgy that appear to imply that some form of trance or hypnosis was being used to guide the initiate through this experience. (All quotes are taken from the excellent English translation edited by Marvin W. Meyer.)[58] The text begins with an invocation to Helios Mithras, followed by seven prayers; and the ascent of the soul, consisting of seven stages. These stages are:

1. The four elements;
2. The lower powers of the air;
3. Aion and the Aionic powers;
4. Helios;
5. The Seven Fates;
6. The bull-headed Seven Pole Lords;[59]
7. And (finally) The Highest God, portrayed as Helios Mithras.

This is followed by instructions for obtaining and preparing the herb used in the initiation ceremony, and making the amulets it required. The Mithras Liturgy is interspersed with numerous "barbarous words" (incomprehensible magical words whose meanings have been long since forgotten, yet are deemed powerful and necessary for success). Also, the initiate is asked to make certain noises (bellowing, hissing, and popping) at various points—all of which give the text a very magical feel.

There are indications that props may have been used during the initiation, including ways to simulate thunder and lightning and bursts of light whenever the initiate was meant to see them. There is also a description of juices consisting of an unidentified herb called "kentritis", which was smeared over the eyes along with rose oil:

"Then, after you have entertained and feasted together, put away, in a pure manner, the *ointment for the immortalization*. If you want to show this to someone else, take the juice of the herb called 'kentritis,' and smear it, along with rose oil, over the eyes of the one you wish; (775) and *he will see so clearly that he will amaze you*. I have not found a greater spell than this in the world."

—Mithras Liturgy 774–775 (italics mine)

It may well be that this kentritis juice — called the "ointment for the immortalization" — which was deemed necessary for this experience, had

psychotropic properties; but there is no way to know for sure, as we do not know exactly what plant was being referred to. The text makes reference to a "daughter" who seems to have been responsible for making the ointment; and since the term "daughter" is often used in Egyptian medical and magical texts to describe an apprentice, it may actually refer to a lower-grade male initiate serving that function.[60]

Hypnotic elements in the Mithras Liturgy

"Draw in breath from the rays, drawing up three times as much as you can, and you will see yourself being lifted up and ascending to the height, so that you seem to be in mid-air. You will hear nothing either of man or of any other living thing, nor in that hour will you see anything of mortal affairs on earth, but rather you will see all immortal things."

—Mithras Liturgy 539–544

Here the initiate has been told to draw in a breath, as much as he can hold, in order to see himself ascending as though he were rising through the air. He is then told that he will neither hear nor see anything outside of his internal experiences "of immortal things." Both of these instructions sound very much like what a hypnotist might regularly say to his subjects in the course of carrying out a hypnotic induction: "Take in a big breath and hold it for a count of three, and as you let that breath go nothing you hear going on outside will disturb or distract you in any way…"

The initiate is told to "see yourself being lifted up," meaning he is to visualize this happening as though he was observing himself rising, rather than experiencing this from a first-person perspective. He sees himself ascending, so that he feels that he is "in mid-air;" this is again reminiscent of the Ultra Height trance experience that seems to be described in the Hermetic *Poimandres*. If you recall, in Ultra Height the hypnotist gives the subjects suggestions for the mind to rise higher and higher, as the body goes deeper and deeper into relaxation; this often gives the hypnotized subject a

feeling of mental levitation as he perceives his mind becoming freed from the weight of his body.

After that, what the initiate will see and need to say is described to him in sequence.

"After you have said these things, he will immediately respond with a revelation. Now *you will grow weak in soul and will not be in yourself,* when he answers you. He speaks the oracle to you in verse, and after speaking he will depart. But you remain silent, since you will be able to comprehend all these matters by yourself; *for at a later time you will remember infallibly the things spoken by the great god*, even if the oracle contained myriads of verses."

—Mithras Liturgy 720–730 (Italics mine)

The third prayer is to be said with the eyes closed, which assumes that his eyes were open up to this point. The esoteric and exoteric names of the solar disc are then uttered. Upon opening their eyes, the initiate sees the solar deity as a youth with glowing hair and a fiery crown. Gates are then entered, and three sets of seven deities are encountered. Finally, the initiate beholds Mithras himself holding the golden shoulder of the bull (which the text identifies with the constellation of the Bear) in his right hand, as lightning leaps from his eyes and stars radiate from his body. The initiate is then told to bellow until he is out of breath, and he kisses the phylacteries (amulets with protective religious texts) prepared for the journey beforehand. Mithras then gives him a revelation to take back with him…

"For in that day and hour you will see the divine order of the skies: the presiding gods rising into heaven and others setting. Now the course of the visible gods will appear through the disk of god, my father…you will see the gods staring intently at you and rushing at you. So, at once put your right finger on your mouth and say: 'Silence!'"

—Mithras Liturgy 544–555

Here we have a prime indicator that the initiate is indeed in trance during this experience—that being the phrase: "[you] will not be in yourself." *Then the initiate is specifically told he will remember everything he heard the god say*, which is absolutely necessary to tell subjects before emerging them from trance if they are to remember everything that happened to them afterwards; otherwise, he or she may emerge back to the waking state having no memory at all of anything that occurred while in trance (which can sometimes happen to some after emerging from hypnosis).

Then there is an interesting statement that one can be accompanied on this vision quest by a fellow initiate:

“If you also wish to use a fellow-initiate, so that he alone may hear with you the things spoken, let him remain pure together with you for [?] days, and abstain from meat and the bath. And even if you are alone, and you undertake the things communicated by the god, *you speak as though prophesying in ecstasy.”*

—Mithras Liturgy 734–739 (Italics mine)

If the initiate wants the co-initiate to experience the same thing as he does, he is told how to do so; the main ingredient seems to be the ointment applied to his eyes.

“And if you also wish to show him, then judge whether he is completely worthy as a man: treat him just as if in his place you were being judged in the matter of immortalization, and whisper to him the first prayer, of which the beginning is "First origin of my origin, AEEIOYO." *And say the successive things as an initiate, over his head, in a soft voice, so that he may not hear, as you are anointing his face with the mystery.”*

—Mithras Liturgy 739–745 (Italics mine)

Here ends the sections that concern us. Obviously, the ointment smeared over the eyes had something to do with the particular experience described here (most likely a psychotropic sacrament to assist in the immortalization process); yet there seem to be elements that indicate that the initiate was also in some kind of trance (possibly an Ultra Height trance conducive to these kinds of metaphysical experiences, as with the *Poimandres* we analyzed earlier).

The practice of combining hypnosis and trance with certain psychoactive drugs, to achieve a greater effect than either method used alone, will be a major topic in Volume II. For now, suffice it to say that trance suggestibility can be increased significantly if the two are combined correctly. Psychotropic drugs on their own can be difficult to channel for the purpose of achieving goals such as the well-defined initiatory experience presented here; but with the addition of hypnotic suggestions (some given ahead of time), drug experiences can be "kept on track" to help transform them into coherent and memorable experiences suitable for creating the kinds of initiatory visions that will be likely to continue to impress the initiate throughout his or her life.

CHAPTER
17

CHAPTER 17: Asclepius and Incubation

Healing in the Sleep Temples of Asclepius, God of Medicine

"Go in good, come out better."

—Inscription from the Asclepieion at Lambaesis in Africa

One of the most influential Greco-Roman gods, whose legacy continues to resonate in Western culture today, was Asclepius the god of medicine, doctors, and healing. Even to this day, medical students still recite an ancient oath to Asclepius upon becoming full-fledged doctors. His primary symbol, a single snake twirling up a wooden staff, can still be found on the backs of ambulances and embedded within hospital logos all around the world.

Fig.44

In ancient times, he was mostly famous for his sleep temples called *asclepieia*, which functioned as the world's very first hospitals. Much can be said about him, since a lot has been preserved about the goings-on in his popular temples; but we will only say enough about him and his temples here to investigate how they may have used trance and hypnosis.

The Mythology of Asclepius

In Greek mythology, Asclepius was the son of Apollo, an important god of healing in his own right until Asclepius eventually supplanted him in fame and popularity. Apollo's bow, his most prominent symbol, shot arrows that could bring down sickness and plagues upon humankind (hence our word "toxin" from the Greek word *toxos* for "bow"). But Apollo was also the god who, when properly petitioned, could reverse his punishments and restore health and well-being to the afflicted (we'll examine a lot more about this particular aspect of the god Apollo in the next chapter ahead).

Briefly, the story goes that Asclepius became the "doctor of all doctors," having been taught medicine by the wise centaur Chiron; his healing abilities and medical knowledge then came to surpass those of any other mortals or gods, including his teacher. But there came a time when Asclepius had acquired such incredible powers to heal that he was at one point able to resurrect a mortal man from the dead (there are three versions of the myth as to who that was). This act infuriated Hades, who complained to Zeus that by resurrecting the dead Asclepius was stealing souls that were rightfully his. In response, Zeus felt obligated to strike and kill Asclepius with a lightning bolt. His father Apollo was so angry with Zeus for killing Asclepius that, in revenge, he killed the one-eyed Cyclopes who forged Zeus's thunderbolts for him. The stories about what happened to him afterwards are inconsistent and not very clear—some say he was raised to the heavens afterwards as the constellation Ophiuchus—the serpent-bearer—but all agree that afterwards he was somehow resurrected and went on to wander the earth healing the sick. He continued to practice the art of healing, as well as teaching others the best remedies and potions to relieve and cure people from the many diseases they endured.

Like his Egyptian counterpart, Imhotep, Asclepius may have originally started out as an exceptional healer who was held in the highest regard in his time, yet was still more or less human—a hero, as it were. But no one quite knows for sure. He played a role here and there in a few myths, for example as a physician in the *Iliad* where Homer portrayed him as more or less a mortal man; and he even managed to land a cameo appearance as one of the Argonauts in the famous story of Jason's search for the Golden Fleece. As time went on, his status was gradually elevated from that of a

hero to a full-blown divine being worthy of worship in his own right, complete with his own entourage and temples. Though he was often accompanied by his daughter Hygieia (a personification of the Greek word for "health," from which we get the word “hygiene”), he also had three sons —Machaon and Podaleiros, who became the demi-gods of surgery and internal medicine respectively and who assisted him as divine specialists; his third son being Telesphoros (bringer of fulfillment) who became the demigod of convalescence, assisting the patient to continue to heal as he or she approached the final completion of the cure.

The kindly and compassionate nature of Asclepius

Long before Christianity, when ancient Greeks referred to “the Savior” in conversation, everyone knew the one god being talked about: Asclepius.

Along with Prometheus, Asclepius was considered one of the few beneficent and philanthropic gods whose self-sacrifice and compassion for humankind caused him to be perceived as a true patron of the human race, selflessly devoting himself to the well-being of mortals and to relieving them as much as possible from the fate to which the gods had forever relegated them. With a few exceptions, the Olympian gods had shown themselves to be ambivalent at best when it came to humanity’s predicament; but Asclepius’ selflessness and self-sacrifice had earned him the gratitude and respect of humankind in ways never demonstrated towards any other gods or goddesses. Many Greco-Roman gods and goddesses had their traditional centers of worship established at particular cities and locations. However, temples dedicated to Asclepius could be found spread throughout the Greco-Roman world, without any geographical limitations tying them to any particular mythical location or locations.

Asclepius and the early Christians

Because of Asclepius' nature, and his reputation as a savior and god of pure love and compassion, the Christians who later arrived on the scene had a more difficult time demonizing him than they did the other Greek and

Roman gods. The earliest images of Jesus found in catacombs and underground rooms where the earliest Christians worshipped portray him as a beardless man wielding a magic wand. The keen competition that arose between the pagan savior Asclepius, and his Christian counterpart, has been put forward as the reason why Jesus began to be commonly portrayed with a beard (looking less like Harry Potter and more like the wizened sage pictured in Sunday school story books nowadays). In so doing, Jesus acquired—and forever appropriated—the iconic bearded look that the savior god Asclepius was best known for.

The common consensus at the time— that miraculous healings occurred in the temples of Asclepius — was never disputed by the early Christians; though they only acknowledged it begrudgingly, along with the caveat that all such healings were actually the work of the devil (although one can easily imagine the difficulties they had explaining why Satan and his minions would engage in healing activities, being the epitome of evil and all…) Ironically, other Christian apologists at the time would end up defending Jesus' miracles from his pagan detractors by pointing out that they (the pagans) all believed in the same kind of miracles wrought by Asclepius in his temples (trying to have it both ways, I guess).

"When we say that He [Jesus] made well the lame and the paralytic and those who were feeble from birth and that he resurrected the dead, we shall seem to be mentioning deeds similar to and even identical with those which were said to have been performed by Asclepius."

—Justin Martyr, church father, (c.155 CE) Apologia, 22, 6

Temples of Asclepius

Temples of Asclepius (*asclepieia*) functioned as the world's first hospitals. His largest and most famous temple was the one at Epidaurus in southeastern Greece, a vast complex with all the amenities of what would appear to us now to be a sprawling and rather lavish health spa and resort. Along with the huge temple dedicated to Asclepius, it had facilities for exercise, amphitheaters, a gymnasium, and all the creature comforts

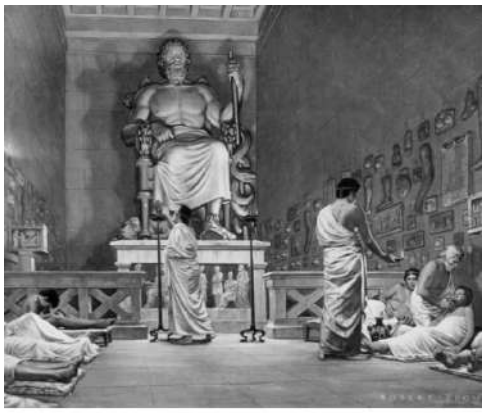

Fig. 45 Temple of Asclepius

necessary to provide a peaceful and nurturing environment conducive to healing and recovery.

Fig. 46 Testimonial to Asclepius: "Tyche (good fortune) to Asclepius and Hygeia, a token of thanks."

The walls of the temple's interior were decorated with ceramic models of human body parts, all donated as testimonials from grateful patients who were healed there. Small and life-sized arms, legs, hands, and even genitals could be seen hung up everywhere. These served to demonstrate, to those who arrived there for treatment, the efficacy of the healing that went on there. This kind of religious display can still be found at Catholic shrines around the world in the form of the crutches and wheelchairs donated by those thankful for their cures from Mother Mary or some saint they had prayed to; and none of these are so different from the certificates, credentials, and pictures drawn in crayon by grateful little kids that can be found adorning the waiting-room walls of so many doctors' offices

nowadays.

Sacred to Asclepius were snakes and dogs, which were allowed to freely roam the temple floors and are often depicted with the god on his statues. For someone doing a sleep-over at one of his temples, being licked by either one was considered to be very auspicious indeed:[61]

"A dog cured a boy from Aegina. He had a growth on the neck. When he came to the god, one of the sacred dogs healed him—while he was awake—with his tongue and made him well."

—Inscriptiones Graecae, IV, [2nd half of 4th c. BCE] Stele 2, 26, Edelstein p.234

The snakes inhabiting the temples of Asclepius were very large, but also very docile and tame. Snakes have gotten a bad rap since the Judeo-Christian religions took over; but prior to that they were symbolic of health and immortality all throughout the ancient world. Since they shed their skins, it was widely believed that they could shed one mortal coil for another, and were thus virtually immortal—hence the serpent wrapped around Asclepius' staff has been his primary symbol to this day. (The staff with *two* serpents intertwined around it is the symbol of Hermes, called the *caduceus*, which is often confused with the staff of Asclepius that has only one).

The *therapeutae*, the priestly functionaries who ran the day-to-day operations at the *asclepieia*, saw to the needs of the sick who came there to receive a remedy directly from the god Asclepius himself. But it was the specialist physician (hypnotist?) called an *iatromantis* who carried out the cures for those who came to sleep in the temples for healing. Curiously, a most notable feature of the *asclepieia* was the general lack of physicians practicing medicine there; though there are some documented instances of surgeries performed inside the temples while patients were in a state of *enkoimesis* (incubative trance). Architectural decorations found on the marble ceiling of a temple sanctuary at Epidaurus that portray poppy flowers provide indirect evidence that opium was most probably used as a soporific given to patients before enkoimesis, which would have greatly facilitated any surgeries performed there.[62]

Another notable and interesting feature was that the medical technology that was gradually progressing during the long time the *asclepieia* were in service (thanks to physicians such as Hippocrates) never dislodged the much different metaphysically-based treatments used in the temples of Asclepius. To the contrary—these physicians were in fact very supportive of the "dream" treatments performed in his temples; and they considered what happened there to be on the whole complementary to their more empirical approaches.

One of the skills of being a physician, then as now, was the ability to determine whether or not there was a viable treatment available to the patient, and whether the doctor would be able to help the sick person at all. If a physician diagnosed someone as unable to benefit from his treatment, he was morally obligated to send them away, and leave them to their own devices to either recover or not. This made sense, since it's never good for a physician's reputation to have patients he is treating die under his care. So, it seems that many of the sick who went to Asclepius for healing were those who had already seen a doctor or doctors and had been told that there was nothing more that could be done for them, making taking a trip to the *asclepieion* their last-ditch effort to obtain a cure.

"Having despaired of the skills of mortals, but with every hope in the divine, forsaking Athens, blessed with children, coming to your sacred grove, Asclepius, I was healed in three months of a festering wound which I had on my head for a whole year."

—Thank-offering to Asclepius by Aeschines the Rhetor[63]

Curiously (and somewhat suspiciously), the advice personally received from Asclepius was not always concerned with healing…

"But it is even said that the god revealed boxing tricks to a certain boxer of our day in his sleep…the god has revealed to us means of study, lyric poetry, subjects for speeches, and in addition to this, the actual ideas and the style, like those who teach boys to write."

—Aelius Aristides, "XLII An Address Regarding Asclepius", 11

Enigmatic prescriptions given by Asclepius

“We were ordered to do many paradoxical things; among those which I recall there is a race I had to run barefoot in winter-time, and again horse-riding, the hardest of undertakings…”

—Aelius Aristides, “Oratorio XLVII,” 65

The prescriptions given to suppliants by Asclepius as he made his nightly rounds were often nonsensical and bizarre by modern standards. They are, however, highly reminiscent of the kinds of enigmatic prescriptions hypnotist Milton Erickson sometimes suggested to his hypnotized subjects. Many of the Zen-like prescriptions Erickson gave to his patients seem absurd on the face of it; yet upon analysis they actually functioned as a complex subterfuge for changing subconscious beliefs and behaviors.

Erickson was the originator of "conversational hypnosis," whereby covert suggestions are embedded in regular conversation to hypnotize listeners without them ever being aware they are being influenced by it. Although there are lots of ways to do this in English and other European languages, as mentioned in the section on Gorgias and the sophists, I have no idea how this would be done when it came to conversations conducted in Classical Greek or Latin. Both languages have grammars radically different from our own and the Romance languages. I will leave it up to someone more versed than I in the fine points of those classical languages as to how that would be accomplished.[64]

Traditional Description of Incubation

The incubation process (supposedly) worked as follows: after undergoing preliminary purification rituals, the suppliant slept at night on a kind of bedstead or camp-bed called a *kline* (from which we get our word “clinic”). This happened in the largest part of the temple, called the *abaton*. Before going to sleep, the incubants were each given something to drink, a hypnotic intoxicant or soporific of some kind, to “soften them up” for the

experience to come. This may be not unlike the way it is often advantageous to a stage hypnotist for his onstage volunteers to have already have had a few drinks under their belts (but not to be drunk, of course). Dominating the area was a huge statue of Asclepius himself, surrounded by statues of related deities such as Hypnos, the god of sleep, or Morpheus the god of dreams.

In the recurring ancient descriptions of how people were healed in Asclepian sleep temples, the god appeared to them in a dream and recommended an appropriate remedy which would result in a cure. In some instances, though, the incubants might simply wake up the next morning and find themselves completely cured.

"For there was a seeming, as it were, to touch him [Asclepius] and to perceive that he himself had come, and *to be between sleep and waking*, and to wish to look up and to be in anguish that he might depart too soon, and to strain the ears and to hear *some things as in a dream, some as in a waking state*."

—Aelius Aristides, *The Sacred Tales: II*, XLVIII, 32 (italics and brackets added)

When Asclepius did appear to the incubant, it was most often in a form resembling his statue—that of an elderly bearded man. He was often accompanied, when he made his rounds, by a retinue that included his sons and his daughter Hygeia. Then, one by one, Asclepius touched the body parts of the incubants who needed healing, or sometimes just whispered to them a prescription for their cure.

There were no dream interpreters in the *asclepieia*, as there were interpreter priests most commonly found at oracle sites throughout the Greco-Roman world—interpreters who could "rig" the responses to the questions posed by visitors. In Athens, there was an Asclepian priest (called an *iatromantis*) chosen by lot, showing that medical qualifications were not required for a priest to minister in the *asclepieion* there. The term *iatromantis* translates to "doctor prophet," which doesn't seem to fit since the priests at the *asclepieia* were neither doctors nor prophets (at least in the sense of a prophet as someone who predicts the future). But considering, as

we'll see, what *really* went on there, perhaps its proper meaning should really probably be something more like “hypnotist-suggester.”

Objections to hypnosis being the cause for healing at the temples of Asclepius

It has for a long time been suspected that hypnosis was used by the priests during incubation to heal the sick who had come to the temples to sleep overnight. Ludwig and Emma Edelstein, who wrote the classic *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies,* rejected the idea that hypnotism was behind the healings that occurred in the temples of Asclepius. Along with others, they asserted that it was because “animal magnetism” [meaning mesmerism] was unknown in antiquity”[65]

The kinds of objections put forward against hypnosis back then (the book was first published in 1945) were the sort that might be expected coming from scholars lacking what we now know about hypnosis and trance (or any knowledge at all about trance and hypnosis, for that matter). One objection was that patients would not have been able to remember their "dreams," which the incubants would have had to be able to do (whereas it is typical of someone emerging from somnambulism to have no memory of what happened to them).[66] This of course could have been easily corrected simply by telling the subject that he or she would remember everything that was said to them after they emerged from trance. It was claimed that mass hypnosis of the suppliants in the temple would have been impossible; though that criticism turns out to be irrelevant, as you'll see shortly when we reveal the hypnotic method that was most likely being used there.

Other objections that have been put forward are somewhat archaic presumptions which are now generally considered false, such as the notion that in antiquity religion and magic were entirely separate (when really it was often difficult to tell the difference, other than by the context in which the two were performed). According to their logic, engaging in hypnotism —which so closely resembled the lowly practice of magic—was "beneath" the activities one could attribute to a god like Asclepius, who was beyond ethical and moral reproach: “no true deity would have promoted magic, an unholy art, not worthy of those who believe in gods."[67] Yet another even

more ridiculous criticism offered in opposition to the claim that hypnosis was used, was the assertion that "Asclepius' help did not involve faith"—a presumption clearly not true in any case, especially when it comes to matters involving healing.[68]

Rejecting hypnosis left scholars without any natural explanations

But rejecting hypnosis as the natural explanation behind Asclepian healings left the Edelsteins and other detractors of its use in a quandary: "Now two problems really need clarification: how could people have such dreams as they claimed they had? How could they feel cured afterwards or get better by applying the devices proposed in their dreams or concluded from them by the interpretation of their content?"[69]

“Incubation might be called ‘dreaming under controlled conditions,’ and it is still a mystery how the priests could practically guarantee dreams of this kind…Perhaps a drug was administered, and hypnosis may have been used.”

—Luck, George*: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds,* p.185

This enigma has persisted to the present day, and if hypnosis was involved (as some people have always suspected), the exact method as to how it may have been used has been elusive, *until now...*

Nobody did the math!

The difficulty in accepting the modus operandi proffered by the ancients as to how sleep temples worked lies in the fact that two thirds of the people who went there for cures would have been very unlikely to remember any dreams they may have had while sleeping there…

A big problem with the traditional account of what happened in the sleep temples of Asclepius is that *most people find it very difficult to remember their dreams at all.* This makes the given historical explanation—that the patients there were cured by their dreams—highly unlikely. In fact, a CBS News poll found that two thirds of respondents were never or only sometimes able to remember their dreams. *Only one third of respondents said they could remember their dreams most or all of the time.*[70] And if only one suppliant out of three was likely to remember his or her dreams from their night in the sleep temple, then how many of those actually had dreams about the god delivering a remedy to them, and not about something else? Obviously, these do not put the odds in favor of dreams being truly behind the many successful healings attested to in *asclepieia* found all around the Greco-Roman world.

Of those 1/3 of suppliants that may have been able to remember the dreams they had while they slept there, how many of them would have been able to control the otherwise

random content of their dreams so that Asclepius appeared in them, and not something else? This lowers the probability that dreaming was involved at all to almost nil…

A New Hypothesis for Temple Healing

My hypothesis is that at night the temple priests took turns impersonating Asclepius, much as nowadays some uncle or relative volunteers to dress up like Santa and give out toys to believing little girls and boys on Christmas morning. The designated priest impersonating Asclepius for the night probably also put on a fake beard (if he didn't have a beard already), then he and his retinue made his rounds. Using some variation of HypnoSleep, he brought incubants up from sleep into somnambulism. There they were given positive suggestions for healing or prescriptions for recovery, then guided back to sleep again—all without the incubant ever waking up. I mplanted memories intentionally given by the *iatromantis* during the hypnosis process were able to create the memory of a dream *which the incubant never had.* But instead of having total amnesia about what was said and done during the night upon awakening the following morning, they would more than likely have been told at some point by the Asclepius impersonator that he or she *would remember* what was seen and heard that night the next day (which is easy to instruct a person in hypnosis to do).

This solves the conundrum as to how pretty much all the incubants who slept in the *asclepieion* would have been able to remember their "healing dreams," as well as why the idea that Asclepius personally appeared and touched the sleeping suppliant was a ubiquitous feature that was expected and experienced by almost all who went there for healing. And the fact that the great hypnotist Dave Elman himself considered HypnoSleep to be the deepest trance attainable strengthens the claim that the particular technique used in the *asclepieion* possessed the efficacy to bring about the kind of healings and permanent change the job required.

HypnoSleep—A Better Explanation

So, I offer here a much better explanation that includes the use of a particular type of hypnotic technique briefly mentioned back in chapter 9—*HypnoSleep* . This appears to be the only and best explanation for what the

priests were actually doing to reliably get the kind of results attested to by the many surviving testimonials from patients thanking Asclepius for their cures.

Although the techniques of HypnoSleep were first introduced into modern hypnotism by Dave Elman, ways of inducing it have been widely known and used by different cultures in different places all around the world long before it was popularized it in his landmark work *Hypnotherapy,*[71] which he dictated to his wife three years before his death in 1967.

While "classical" hypnosis falls short as an explanation for the healings we know occurred during the so-called dream incubation that occurred at the temples of Asclepius, HypnoSleep serves to explain ancient descriptions of what happened there very simply and eloquently. And it provides a more viable and much more credible explanation than that which has been handed down for centuries from the ancient Greeks and Romans, and blindly assumed to be true up to now.

HypnoSleep is the technique of bringing subjects “up” from sleep into somnambulism, giving them the desired suggestions, and then releasing them directly back “down” into sleep— *the subject never having been awake during the entire process.* Any possible resistance of the type that might sometimes occur when a subject is induced into somnambulism from a waking state and given certain hypnotic suggestions is completely removed. This allows suggestions that might otherwise be rejected in somnambulism to be fully accepted by the subject without any hindrance.

The HypnoSleep Process

The ancient Greeks may have discovered the practice of HypnoSleep by observing sleep behavior, for they certainly knew about taking ideas into dreams and they clearly had techniques for manipulating mental states to elicit certain behaviors.

The process for inducing HypnoSleep begins with very gently rousing a person who is deeply asleep with a delicate nudge and softly calling them

by name in an almost whispering, very soft tone of voice. The whole idea is for the subject to respond *without ever really waking up* .

As soon as the person hypnotizing hears the subject respond (usually with a very drowsy “huh?”), he or she then whispers something like “You can hear me, but you won’t wake up… You can hear every word I say, but you’ll stay fast asleep…” and so on, over and over.

After a short while and many such repetitions, the person acting as the hypnotist then gives the sleeping subject hypnotic suggestions, though these must be much simpler than the kind given in regular hypnosis since subjects are so near sleep that they are less able to process complex sentences. Then, after suggestions have been repeatedly given, the subject is told: "Now, with everything you've heard inside you now, I want you to go ahead and gently drift off and return back to a peaceful and relaxing sleep…" Typically, upon awakening the next morning, the subject will have absolutely no memory at all of what occurred, *unless told otherwise before being sent back to sleep.* So, since the whole idea was for patients sleeping at the *asclepieia* to remember the "dreams" they had had there, they would certainly need to be given the suggestion to do so before being released back to sleep.

One of the indicators that Asclepius (or at least the priest impersonating him) practiced hypnotism was that he was said to speak "with a harmonious voice." This is even now an important feature of how a hypnotist should speak to his or her subject in hypnosis. "He laughed, and had a sense of humor such that there was nothing terrifying about his demeanor at all."[72] "In addition, the patient was asked to have holy thoughts (in other words, to enter with an optimistic outlook)."[73] This is exactly what hypnotherapists would ask from their patients in the "pre-talk" given to them before proceeding with the hypnosis.

Easy yet powerful hypnosis

A major reason why Dave Elman considered HypnoSleep to be the deepest level of hypnosis attainable during his time (there have been other, deeper trance states discovered since then) was because the hypnotic subject is never conscious at all during the process, since if they were it

might interfere with their acceptance of suggestions (as may sometimes happen when someone is guided from the waking state into somnambulism and then back again).[74]

Although HypnoSleep produces powerful results, as you can imagine, it's not a particularly practical clinical hypnotic technique to use, since few hypnotherapists have the time to wait around for their patients to fall asleep to perform it. However, it turns out that Mormon men have been practicing HypnoSleep on their wives for years, calling it "whispering." The method they use is remarkably like Elman's HypnoSleep, which just shows how hypnotic techniques can pop up independently and be rediscovered and applied just about anywhere, anytime.

Such methods obviously open up ample opportunities for abuse, simply because subjects are completely unable to "pop out" of hypnosis and object to unacceptable suggestions that might be given to them (as they would probably normally do while in regular hypnosis). So even the marginal amount of resistance the subject might normally be able to invoke when triggered by perceived danger or a somehow threatening situation during a normal hypnosis session *is completely gone.*

The dream explanation is also challenged, and HypnoSleep supported as the actual modus operandi used in Asclepian temples, by the following: It was said that the incubants were always cured if Asclepius appeared in their "dreams."[75] Also, the god might appear either in a dream *or sometimes while the suppliant was awake*— a very suspicious scenario that implies hypnosis was at work, *not* dreaming.[76]

“Q. May a man procure a dream by an external cause?

A. If a man speaks softly in another man's ear and awake him not, then of his stirring of the spirits there are thunderings and buzzings in the head, which cause dreamings.”

—Aristotle, from his *Book of Problems*

The quote from Aristotle above indicates that the Greeks knew about HypnoSleep, and that Aristotle may well have known it to be the technique used inside the *asclepieia*. Such remarks may indicate that the Greeks did not really distinguish between someone in hypnosis and someone dreaming (as far as we can tell). However, the majority of references we have from Late Antiquity for instances of what we would now call hypnosis characterize it as more or less a kind of possession. For them, the differences between dreams and hypnosis may have been a matter of context. In the case of prophecy, it's the person in hypnosis "possessed" by a god or goddess who does the channeling for what they say; whereas a patient participating in temple incubation was more or less a passive listener hearing the suggestions given to him or her by the god.

Other reasons people were helped to heal at asclepieia

The incredible reputation for success garnered by the *asclepieia* for healing their visitors may have been due to other reasons as well. Although nowadays Roman surgeons are regarded to have been fairly competent at what they did, people visiting physicians for diseases at that time often did not fare as well. The fact that some people needing medical attention came to the temples of Asclepius for healing, rather than remaining under the treatment of a regular physician, may well have actually contributed to their overall recovery, ironically. Patients under a doctor’s care back then were sometimes just as likely to die from the kinds of treatments given to them by their doctors as they were from the diseases or injuries they came to them to cure. Doctors used bloodletting (a procedure famously responsible for killing George Washington) and other treatments that we now consider to be very dangerous and/or harmful. They also often plied their patients with concoctions that were not only ineffective, but sometimes downright

toxic as well (especially those containing large amounts of mercury or lead).

The relaxing resort spa ambiance offered to patients by the larger *asclepieia* offered a peaceful sanctuary for recovery. With plenty of moral support offered by the staff and fellow patients, along with daily regimens of healthy diet and exercise, the *asclepieia* offered a positive environment conducive to healing without suffering from the side effects of what we would now consider to be questionable treatments and medications that were popular at the time.

Fig. 47
Emperor Vespasian 9-79 CE

Roman auctoritas and authority as hypnotic facilitators

Our word "authority" comes from the Latin word *auctoritas*, meaning social prestige, status, and reputation—basically the power to get things done. It also signified the mysterious "power of command" wielded by heroic Roman figures. However, for our purposes here, a notable aspect of the term "auctoritas" *sometimes included the power to miraculously heal others.*

That was indeed a power attributed to the Roman emperor Vespasian, who ruled from 69 to 79 CE. Three ancient Roman historians—Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio—specifically mention two instances of miracle healings allegedly performed by him while he was in Alexandria in the year 70 CE. Two men approached Vespasian together, throwing themselves to the ground in front of him. One of them was blind and the other had a paralyzed hand. Vespasian granted them permission to speak. They told the emperor that they had both had a dream or vision from the god Serapis

telling them they could be healed by Vespasian if he spat in the blind man's eye and stepped on the paralyzed hand of the other man. After some reticence, his friends and advisors convinced him to accede to their requests. He then did to them what the god told them he must do, and supposedly they were both healed on the spot, right then and there, to everyone's amazement. The stories of these healings in Alexandria spread like wildfire to become the talk of the entire Empire, and went on to become one of the most talked-about events of his reign.[77]

The reason why his healing worked was surely due to the *auctoritas* he wielded as the new emperor. Even then, there seemed to have been a belief similar to what would later be called "the divine right of kings," which gave prominent figures such as Vespasian the power to instill in his subjects the faith necessary for such things to happen. By the 17th century, when *auctoritas* had been formalized in the concept of "the divine right of kings," Charles II of England (1630–1685) was said to have cured 7,000 people of scrofula, a disease caused by tuberculosis bacteria, in just one year by using the "laying on of hands" technique described in the gospels.

"…we see that those who are being treated by the god [Asclepius] obey him when on many occasions he bid them not to drink at all for fifteen days, while they obey none of the physicians who give this prescription."

—Galen, *Commentarius in Hippocratis Epidemias*, VI, 1v, Section IV, 8

If the *auctoritas* of Vespasian, an emperor, had the power to elicit faith sufficient for healing, how much more powerful would be the authority perceived to be coming from a god like Asclepius (or at least a priest believably playing the part)? As in Galen's quote above, Asclepius had the *auctoritas* physicians lacked, securing compliance on behalf of his patients in ways they were never able to.

In the case of suppliants seeking cures from him at his temples, it may have been the authority wielded by a larger-than-life godlike figure such as Asclepius that might well have done the trick when he merely suggested to a patient in hypnosis to just go ahead and heal him or herself. "Authority" is a powerful hypnotic driver for automatic compliance on the part of a hypnotic subject. It's the same effect a doctor has on patients as soon as he enters a waiting room wearing his white smock and a stethoscope around his neck—all symbols of his "authority" as a professional doctor that people are culturally conditioned to respond to with the respect due to his high social status as a physician.

Transactional expectations on the part of suppliants

Suppliants coming to Asclepius for healing were required to make some kind of offering, no matter how modest, to the god in return for his services. That, and the *transactional* nature of the seemingly absurd Zen-like prescriptions sometimes given by Asclepius to his patients, may have served all on its own to facilitate healing. "If you do X, then Y (healing) will happen" is the formula—task "X" not really even required to be anything of medical value. Since a non-sensical prescription is believed by the patient to have been given directly to him or her by a god, it is not necessary or appropriate to question it, no matter how ludicrous it might be. All the patient needs is the faith that, if he or she performs whatever the god tells them to do, the cure will naturally follow upon fulfillment of the god's bidding (if X, then Y).

Psychosomatic vs. psychogenic illnesses

Most people are familiar with the term “psychosomatic” illness, meaning a physical illness which is aggravated by mental issues. However, the precise term for the illness we’ll be discussing for our purposes here is actually “psychogenic,” meaning that *the illness itself arose from purely psychological causes.*

Unfortunately, there is little a regular physician can do for someone suffering from a psychogenic illness. Unlike physical disorders, purely psychogenic illnesses of the type often encountered by doctors would have been immune from physical treatments. Psychogenic disorders present symptoms that suggest illness or injury, but no physical cause can be found for them. In other words, the patient’s brain is doing it. Psychogenic illnesses were just as common then as now. But fortunately, hypnosis—which deals with the mind rather than the body—is very effective for curing such individuals as you'll see.

The first documented instance of psychogenic illness in ancient Greece

PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), although a relatively new diagnosis, is as old as war itself. PTSD can sometimes physically convert into psychogenic disorders, illnesses self-imposed by a person's subconscious mind in a desperate (and often irrational) attempt to avoid ever experiencing the same type of trauma ever again.

“Trauma: a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury.”

—*Webster’s Dictionary,* definition b. for “trauma”

During World Wars I and II, it was not unusual for soldiers to suffer from "shellshock," as it was commonly known back then—combat trauma from overexposure to the intolerable conditions of terror and insanity experienced during wartime. Most people have seen photographs from these wars of debilitated soldiers with the stereotypical blank, thousand-yard stare characteristic of those suffering from shellshock. But for soldiers this kind of reaction is nothing new…

"…an Athenian, Epizelos the son of Cuphagoras, while fighting in close combat and proving himself a good man, was deprived of the sight of his eyes, neither having received a blow in any part of his body nor having been hit with a missile, and for the rest of his life from this time he continued to be blind…"

—Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.117, 1-2

Ancient Greek warriors wounded in battle, like Epizelos above who fought during the Battle of Marathon against the Persians, would also have been susceptible to battlefield trauma (long before literal shellshock was a thing). This instance recounted by Herodotus is the first example of psychosomatic (technically psychogenic) illness recorded from the Greco-Roman world (there have also been some examples of wartime trauma found in ancient Mesopotamian texts recently).

Herodotus goes on to recount Epizelos' explanation of what led to the onset of his trauma-induced blindness…

“…It seemed to him [Epizelos] that a tall man in full armour stood against him, whose beard overshadowed his whole shield; and this apparition passed him by, but killed his comrade who stood next to him.”

—Herodotus, Histories, 6.117, 3

According to Epizelos, the trauma that caused his blindness happened when an enemy warrior of terrifying proportions passed him by, only to kill his comrade standing next to him. No doubt he personally witnessed the slaughter of his friend in gory detail by this veritable giant of a human being and, along with the realization that he just barely missed being the one killed by him, reacted to the trauma by becoming blind for the rest of his life. A modern psychologist might say that his reaction to that horrible situation in the form of blindness was his subconscious mind’s way to protect him from ever having to see anything like that again. Although there are no treatments available to any physician that are capable of curing such a strictly psychological illness, Epizelos would have been a perfect candidate for receiving a cure for his blindness at a temple of Asclepius, a place that specialized in effective healings for just this type of psychogenic illness.

Effectiveness of hypnosis for treating psychogenic illnesses

For a modern-day hypnotist, curing a psychogenic illness is often a matter of putting the patient into hypnosis and asking them when the symptoms first occurred and what happened to bring on their onset. Although the person may not know the answers to these questions while conscious and awake, in hypnosis they can often answer these questions—knowing when and what triggered their symptoms.

As a generic but common example, a woman who as a young girl was molested by her uncle may have repressed the memory of that awful encounter and became blind as a consequence, presumably in order to protect herself from the trauma of ever having to see his face again. Once she is hypnotized, the hypnotist treating her can find out these underlying causes that were long hidden even from her, and proceed to give suggestions to persuade her subconscious mind to end it and restore her vision.

It's sometimes as simple as the hypnotist just giving permission to the patient's subconscious mind while in hypnosis to make the desired changes needed for spontaneous recovery to occur. Hypnosis can be similarly effective for people rendered mute, deaf, and so on due to psychological trauma.

Interestingly, a key indicator that someone has a psychogenic illness, rather than a real physical one, is that they are often uncharacteristically casual and blasé towards their self-imposed conditions. This is because there's a part of them that knows their complaints aren't physical or really otherwise permanent. That is not the case for someone truly suffering from the same symptoms due to real physical causes, who are almost always palpably distressed and depressed about their losses and what happened to them.

"A voiceless boy. He came as a suppliant to the temple for his voice. When he had performed the preliminary sacrifices and fulfilled the usual rites, thereupon the temple servant who brings in the fire for the god, looking at the boy's father, demanded he should promise to bring within a year the thank-offering for the cure if he obtained that for which he had come. But the boy suddenly said, 'I promise.' His father was startled at this and asked him to repeat it. The boy repeated the words and after that became well."

—Inscriptiones Graecae, IV, [2nd half of 4th c. BCE] Stele 2, 26, Edelstein p.231

The *auctoritas* wielded by Asclepius, combined with HypnoSleep hypnosis, would have worked exceedingly well together in cases of psychogenic disorders to break the hold of the patient's subconscious mind of its power to continue to maintain his or her consciously undesired condition. The mental dynamics were such that once people did what the god told them to do, their subconscious minds would then be obligated to release them from their self-imposed malady given their strong beliefs about the efficacy and power of the words the god said to them. Whatever reasons caused the patient's subconscious mind to initiate and maintain their psychogenic illness, these were trumped by the decree of a god, which forced it to relinquish its hold over them, yielding its power in favor of the god's perceived all-powerful divine will.

When we get to Volume III, we will see this pattern repeat itself, though it will be the *auctoritas* effectively wielded by Jesus and his disciples. There, what was the power of *auctoritas* applied by larger-than-life figures

like Asclepius and Vespasian supplied the *"faith"* for those who were divinely cured. Along with other hypnotic techniques, this new *auctoritas* gave Jesus and his disciples the ability to "miraculously" cure the ill-stricken people they encountered, most of whom seem to have been victims of the same kinds of self-imposed psychogenic illnesses we just examined.

As all the evidence suggests, hypnosis was in fact the modus operandi behind the very successful operations of the temples of Asclepius during their many centuries of existence—*just not the kind people commonly think of when they think of hypnotism and how it's conducted.* Scholars can now dispense with the fiction of "dream therapy" that has long been used to characterize the treatment method used there.

But perhaps those who ran and supported these institutions were not fully to blame for the subterfuge they offered in place of the truth. After all, how would one expect them to have represented the kind of hypnotism they were performing? To maintain the illusion, and to add the power of the god's *auctoritas* to the mix in order to further facilitate healing, it was necessary for optimum results for the *iatromantis* to subsume his true role to that of the god, and to personify him. Secrecy would have been paramount to maintaining this priestly deception—secrets apparently as well-kept by those in the know at the temples of Asclepius, as were those of the mysteries of Eleusis which continue to be hidden to this day.

"Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Pay it and do not neglect it."

—Last words of Socrates having drunk the hemlock.

CHAPTER
18

CHAPTER 18: Parmenides and Subterranean and Cave Incubation

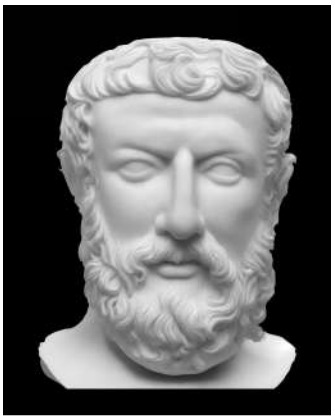

Fig. 48 Parmenides

It's not often that important archaeological evidence is found to be relevant to a topic as non-material as ancient Greek philosophy, a field with little or nothing in the way of physical artifacts beyond the texts and inscriptions that the scholars who study it sometimes work with. *But that is precisely what has happened in our* own case *here.*

What was discovered in 1958 in Elea (later called Velia), a city on the southern coast of Italy, were the remains of a building complex that once belonged to a local philosophical association there. It was later revealed that this philosophical association was founded by none other than Parmenides, "The Father of Logic," arguably (along with Heraclitus) the most famous of pre-Socratic philosophers. It is this same Parmenides who appears in the dialogue of Plato bearing the same name, wherein Plato attempts to articulate his theory of forms.

Beneath one of the complex's buildings, excavations revealed a subterranean chamber once used for conducting the type of incubation rites we'll be discussing here—an area called the *cryptoporticus*. But if that wasn't sensational enough, three fragmentary inscriptions were found on the shattered statue bases discovered in the rubble of the cryptoporticus, which revealed just enough to tell a story. It was a story identifying

Parmenides himself as the first to hold the title "Pholarchos," or *"Lord of the Lair"*—he who presided over the incubation rites that were regularly performed there.

But perhaps the most amazing discovery we will examine here, is the remarkable congruence between the story Parmenides tells about his journey to the underworld in the surviving fragments of his poem *On Nature*; and the new archaeological evidence from Velia that happens to accord perfectly with the particulars of that journey.

A Different Type of Incubation…

We've just finished examining incubation as it was practiced by the *iatromantes* who healed the sick in the temples of Asclepius; but the type of incubation we'll be looking at here is very different in terms of both techniques and outcomes. Although it is sometimes simply called "cave incubation," it encompasses a range of incubation practices, all of which involve prolonged periods of subterranean isolation, sometimes confinement, and (most importantly) conditions conducive to inducing *sensory deprivation* experiences for the sake of ritual. Subterranean structures which (like the cryptoporticus discovered in Velia) were intentionally designed to replicate through architecture the cave-like conditions conducive to sensory deprivation, were sometimes used instead of real caves.

Often, an uninterrupted prolonged stay in an empty tomb or coffin will do the trick—the necessary prerequisites being absolute silence and total darkness. These comprise the philosopher's path to *hesychia*—absolute inner stillness.

The Greeks Really Had a Thing for Caves…

In chapter 7 we examined the role of paleolithic caves (like the one at Chauvet, France) which functioned as ancient sacred spaces, along with evidence that at least some of them were intentionally modified to enhance their intrinsic trance-inducing properties. *But caves never really stopped being used as sacred spaces*—they continued to be used for the same or similar purposes long after Chauvet Cave itself was isolated and erased from view by an avalanche that preserved it almost intact for thousands and thousands of years. In fact, caves served the ancient Greeks as sacred spaces dedicated to a vast variety of gods, heroes, and mythical creatures, some of whom had their own oracles and everything that came with operating one. A cave on Crete was the birth place of Zeus, where he was hidden as an infant from his father Kronos; and more than one cave was

identified by the Greeks as an entrance leading to the underworld, which was used by the heroes of old. Many a grotto inhabited by nymphs had its prophetic interpreters who—inspired by the mania of nympholepsy (i.e., "seizure by the nymphs")—could issue inspired utterances that predicted the future; and then there was Plato's famous "Allegory of the Cave" in his *Republic*.

Katabasis: Descent to the Underworld

A constant theme throughout Greco-Roman mythology is the hero's descent to the underworld and back, which in Greek was called *katabasis* or "a going down." In this chapter, we will examine *katabasis* and the mystical journeys made by mortals down to the underworld, the land of the dead, and back again.

It should be noted that according to beliefs about this that were prominent in the Greco-Roman world, "down" (to the underworld) was not the only direction the soul's out-of-body journeys could take once it was somehow temporarily freed of its mortal bonds. In fact, some of the luckiest and most blessed of souls were believed to have conducted mystical ascensions *up through the heavens,* rather than down to the underworld and the land of the dead—a major topic to be covered later in Volume III.[78]

For the Greeks and Romans, the realm of the afterlife lay deep underground in the vast domain of the dark god Hades—every mortal's ultimate destination. Given such a belief, it makes perfect sense that caves would serve as the ideal entrances to that forbidden realm hidden deep inside the earth.[79] Undercurrents of the Greco-Roman literary tradition that described the imaginal topography of the underworld would persist in Western civilization, to be famously brought to life again a thousand years later by Dante in his work *The Inferno*.

Only ten mortals in antiquity were said to have gone to Hades and back. Hercules and Orpheus are perhaps the most famous of them; but among the other notables who made the roundtrip were Odysseus, Theseus, and Aeneas. Their successful journeys made them (except possibly Orpheus) worthy to serve as models of virtue in the eyes of the educated, and the

aspiring philosophers of the time. In fact, one might even say that a trip to Hades and back was almost obligatory for any self-respecting hero to claim that title.

But what could a visit to the netherworld offer someone who was still alive, besides the obvious fame and boasting rights they could claim afterwards? *Hades was where one could find the answers to all secrets past, present, and future*; and the idea that the dead knew more about human affairs than the living did appears as early as Homer.[80]

This was, in fact, the principal motive behind the practice of necromancy (conjuring up the dead)—to interrogate them using sorcery, and coerce them into revealing to a living magician or sorcerer some otherwise inaccessible secrets that were hidden from the living in the netherworld. But Hades was also a domain of justice, since it was where everyone eventually ended up for their final judgement in the afterlife; and judgement required laws. So it's no coincidence that famous Greeks *were believed to have retrieved during trip(s) to the underworld* the sets of laws they were sometimes called upon to write for newly-founded Greek colonies.

As the miraculous ability to travel to the land of the dead and live to tell the tale had become fashionable for heroes, it was perhaps inevitable that others would eventually take advantage of this prestigious trope as a key to gaining their own notoriety. This included the descent stories that were attributed to the most famous of pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, which were perpetuated (and doubtless exaggerated) over time by their followers; though this was to be expected, since the philosophic schools of the time often behaved more like secretive religious cults of personality.

Caves and the pre-Socratic Greek Philosophers

Even before we get to Parmenides, and the Eleatic philosophical school he founded which thrived for several hundred years after his death, we should note just how many pre-Socratic philosophers had reputations that included caves and cave incubation.

Pherecydes of Syros (Early 6th Century BCE–520 BCE):

Teacher of Pythagoras, wrote the earliest Greek prose treatise (called the *Pentamykhos* or "Five Recesses") which has survived only in small fragments, but is presumed to have been about our present subject here.

“When Pherecydes, the man of Syros, talks of recesses (muchoi) and pits (bothroi) and caves (antra) and doors and gates, and through these speaks in riddles of the creations and disappearances of souls.”

—Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind.* Oxford University Press. p.102.

Dr. Ustinova believes that subterranean cavities have something to do with that lost work, and that Pherecydes may have regarded them as passages between this world and the netherworld of reincarnated souls.[81] Like many others to whom the practice of cave incubation was attributed in ancient Greece, this was believed to have been accomplished during out-of-the-body experiences. All of this was presumably facilitated by the hallucinatory effects brought on by sensory deprivation and, of course, whatever kind of hypnosis (if any) was used to help the entire experience contribute toward a memorable and coherent initiation or other ritual.

Pythagoras (570–490 BCE):

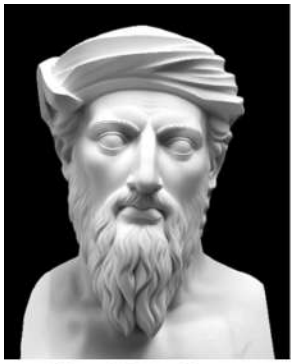

Fig. 49 Pythagoras

Pythagoras, the first to call himself a "philosopher," was credited with multiple descents into caves. He supposedly even traveled to Egypt, descending into the underground *adyta* where he acquired arcane and secret knowledge of the gods and the universe.

It is difficult to overstate the influence Pythagoras had over subsequent Greek philosophy; but even though his behavior (as well as that of many other early Greek philosophers) would, at first glance, seem to modern eyes to have been more appropriate to an eccentric cult leader or magician than to a wizened sage, little or no distinction was made during his time between science and magic, or between philosophers and sorcerers. Although the versions of his biography that have come down to us are unreliable and his life was mired in legend, Pythagoras' strong and persistent association with *katabasis* in the many stories about him is a strong indication that there was something to it in the life of the real man himself.

“Hermippus of Smyrna relates a story about Pythagoras’ descent to an underground chamber: living there, he received information on current events from his mother, and after some time made his appearance in the assembly (presumably in Croton), thin as a skeleton, claiming that he had returned from Hades.”

—Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind* Oxford University Press. p.189.

Epimenides the Cretan (ca. late 7th to early 6th century BCE):

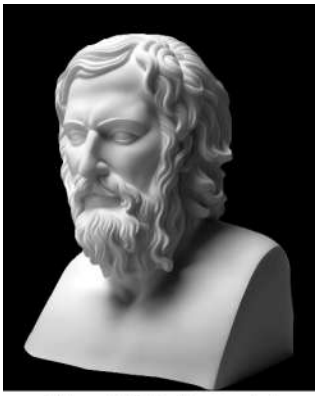

Fig. 50 Epimenides

Most famous for the “liar’s paradox” quoted by Paul in Titus 1:12: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” For our purposes here, he was also famous for being the ancient Greek prototype of Rip Van Winkle, the protagonist of the classic short story of Washington Irving in which Van Winkle drinks liquor with a bunch of dwarves and falls into a deep sleep, only to awaken 20 years later complete with wrinkles and a long white beard.

Irving’s inspiration for his story was indeed none other than Epimenides; but he had Rip van Winkle beat by 37 years! He was said to have fallen asleep in a cave for 57 years; and legend had it that afterwards he went on to live to the ripe old age of 154 (or 299, depending on the ancient source). According to the Roman historian Diogenes Laertius, he was supposedly invited to Athens and rid the city of a plague that had been ravaging it.

Asclepian vs. Mystical Subterranean Incubation

Although it now seems that Asclepian incubation relied on some version of HypnoSleep for trance induction, the sheer isolation and ambience inherent to underground caverns would naturally seem to take advantage of a completely different doorway into trance: *sensory deprivation*. On its own, sensory deprivation is capable of generating a wide variety of intense and profound altered states, *many of which are forms of neither trance nor hypnosis.*[82]

The induction methods used at Asclepian and cave incubations necessarily featured important differences because of their differing ritual contexts. On the one hand, Asclepian HypnoSleep techniques were performed "live" with a personal visit by a visage of Asclepius who talked to the supplicant as though the god himself were really present; and Asclepian incubation was a semi-public temple ritual which encouraged social interactions between the individual, other suppliants, and the temple staff.

In cave incubation, on the other hand, the subject does not receive a comforting visit from kindly Asclepius and his retinue. Then there's the question of whether some form of hypnosis was ever used at all, which would depend on the ultimate goal of the ritual and on proper preparation. We'll consider in a moment what might have been necessary to combine sensory deprivation with hypnotic suggestion in order to foster a guided hypnotic experience; but first we'll be taking a look at the non-trance phenomena that sensory deprivation is capable of producing all on its own*, without any hypnosis or guidance from outside.*

Subterranean Incubation: How was it performed, and to what end?

The truth is that nothing has survived to indicate how cave and subterranean incubation was conducted by the ancient Greeks; but then, it would not be surprising if nothing about this had ever been written down. Like lots of other religious phenomena we've examined, the methods and

techniques behind such things were most often kept strictly secret from outsiders and non-initiates.

Since there is no surviving information about any methods the Greeks may have used for cave incubation, nor even any evidence that trance inductions were performed at all during the sensory deprivation experiences that were carried out for mystical purposes, this topic would at first seem to be off the beaten track as far as hypnosis goes. In fact, it may fit more comfortably in one of this book's several subsections about "psychological phenomena." However, it turns out that in the case of certain mystical practices, hypnosis must have been an essential element for the process to work, just as it must have been for initiations that made use of psychoactive sacraments (to be discussed in depth later on in volume II). Of course, this would have been even more so in cases where psychoactive sacraments were combined together with sensory deprivation for initiatory purposes.

Although there's absolutely nothing to tell us what actually went on during cave incubations, we do have lots of information which implies that the ancient Greeks used cave and subterranean incubation techniques to simulate separation of the soul from the body, and to conduct convincing out-of-body experiences in which imaginal realms were visited.

Sensory Deprivation

Sensory deprivation was mentioned briefly back in chapter 6 as one of the many "doorways into trance." As it is the primary method for inducing telestic (or mystical) cave incubation, it would be useful here to say a bit more about sensory deprivation and its effects.

The simplest and most common means of sensory deprivation that we're familiar with are blindfolds and earmuffs; while the most extreme are state-of-the-art isolation tanks, built specifically for those who want to experience it. Luxuriously designed, they include high-tech features unavailable to the ancient Greeks, such as the ability to float virtually gravity-free in water (the saltwater solution used in the tub suspends the body just above the bottom of the tub, preventing it from touching the body). The water in the isolation tank is gently heated and maintained to match the skin temperature, so the presence of the surrounding water

remains virtually indetectable. This helps to restrict and reduce even more the unwanted intrusion of sensory stimulation, increasing the degree and quality of the experience of sensory deprivation.

Pioneering research on the effects of sensory deprivation was carried out during the 1960s and 70s by Dr. John C. Lilly (1915–2001), who designed and built the first isolation tank in 1954. As a protégé and friend of Dr. Timothy Leary, he experimented with combining isolation with psychedelic drugs. So, we do know some things about sensory deprivation and its effects.

Psychological Effects of Sensory Deprivation Incubation

"The brain during sensory deprivation and meditation practices looks much like that of a brain on LSD…"

—Katherine Stykel. "The Neuroscience Behind Sensory Deprivation." medium.com

Some of the more important experiences produced by sensory deprivation which, though unrelated to trance or hypnosis, do have obvious applications of their own when it comes to specific initiatory goals, are:

1. **Unitive Experiences**:

According to the late author and scholar of mysticism Dan Merkur, "John Lilly established experimentally that profound sensory deprivation can induce unitive experiences."[83] These experiences most often include an overwhelming feeling of oneness, and a profound sense of unity with all of existence. Though this kind of experience happens on its own and does not require hypnotic priming, without it the ability to promote a specific narrative agenda would be very limited.

2. **Initiatory Death:**

According to Merkur, there's another kind of phenomenon beyond unitive experiences that is not produced in trances, but is common to sensory deprivation experiences. This, he says, is the experience called "ecstatic death," "mystic death," or "initiatory death" (more or less a

profound anxiety attack accompanied by feelings of one's impending death).[84]

3. **OBEs:**

"Another subjective result of sensory isolation may be reaching an out-of-body experience (OBE), known also as ecsomatic state, transport, soul fight, soul journey, or astral projection."

—Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind.* Oxford University Press. p.39.

It's surely no coincidence that those whom the Greeks associated with cave incubation were also often the same ones credited by them with the ability to perform out-of-body experiences.

It seems that at least some *katabasis* experiences were the result of incubants undergoing realistic and convincing simulations of out-of-body experiences (OBEs). It was thought that during these "soul journeys," a person's soul could temporarily leave their body and voyage to cosmic realms; learn the secrets hidden there; and bring that forbidden knowledge back to the land of the living for the benefit of all humankind.

Clearly, sensory deprivation *all by itself* offers a lot in the way of producible phenomena that are potentially useful for performing initiations and mystic experiences, without any trance or hypnosis involved. For example, inducing a unitive experience—which is typically accompanied by feelings of ecstatic joy—would be ideal for initiations designed to teach the initiate the essential "oneness" of the cosmos and reality. An experience of "mystic death," on the other hand, would seem optimally suitable for fulfilling the most often-stated goal of initiation in Greco-Roman times: "to die before you die."

Sensory deprivation, all by itself, can trigger intense, profoundly religious experiences. But without using trance or hypnosis to install "guardrails" to guide the series of events taking place, these experiences would most likely take on a life of their own—totally

ignoring any desired goals set for accomplishing any kind of initiation.

However, for those initiations or mystical experiences that seek certain kinds of knowledge, or access to specific imaginal destinations or entities, hypnosis would seem to be a necessary adjunct for successfully guiding and managing the situation to its desirable end. In a form approximating hypnotic "guided meditation," at some opportune point a voice from the outside may intervene to "hijack" the experience, with its added narration helping to segue the situation into a *virtual guided V.I.P. tour* of some imaginal realm.

Without experiencing the spontaneous onset of any of the non-trance phenomena mentioned above, or receiving the kind of post-hypnotic preprogramming suitable for structuring them into something useful, subjects left to their own devices will most likely end up hallucinating random imagery without rhyme or reason; *without purpose.*

Hypnosis and Sensory Deprivation Incubation

"Most important for our purposes is the mechanism of trance-inducing sensory deprivation…"

—Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind.* Oxford University Press. p.102.

Therefore, while some of the phenomena listed above, like profound unitive experiences and initiatory death, would appear at first glance to be perfect for carrying out certain types of initiations, others—like OBEs—require the imposition of a sequential narrative structure in order for the initiate to make sense of them, to focus attention on a specific initiatory narrative, and to retain a coherent and memorable impression of the ordeal afterwards. Otherwise, the constantly morphing stream-of-consciousness imagery presented by the mind to itself, in its desperate efforts to fill the under-stimulated void left by sensory deprivation, would normally take on a random life of its own as is often the case with psychedelic visuals.

Like psychedelic imagery, the kinds of visual reverie experienced when one undergoes sensory deprivation "take

YOU for the ride."

So, the challenge in using the techniques of sensory deprivation is still to end up somehow presenting a coherent initiatory narrative in a memorable way, one that results in a specific revelatory experience. But how can one harness the overwhelming flow of vivid autonomous hallucinations that spontaneously result in the sort of stochastic, often meaningless variations that inevitably occur during sensory deprivation?

Sensory Deprivation for Trance Induction

First, we ought to state what should already be intuitively obvious to anyone who has read up to this point: *sensory deprivation increases hypnotic suggestibility.* It is notable that in one research experiment[85]: "10 volunteer college-age females initially resistant to hypnosis were placed in a light-and sound-attenuated sensory deprivation cubicle for a maximum of 6 hrs. or until sensory deprivation phenomena were elicited. A hypnotic induction was undertaken via a communication system, while S remained in the deprivation cubicle, at a point when E judged that the sensory deprivation was sufficiently intense."

This means that, in this particular research scenario, a verbal hypnotic induction was performed that the subject could hear while in isolation when the experimenter judged that the subject was experiencing sufficient sensory deprivation over a maximum of six hours. After being retested a week later, "the experimental group manifested a significant enhancement of hypnotic susceptibility, and this new level of susceptibility was maintained in the follow-up session."[86]

Conducting Hypnotic Inductions During Sensory Deprivation: Two Possible Ways

Method 1—Real Time

The particular research setup just mentioned might well serve all on its own as an excellent illustration of the first of two ways hypnosis could have been effectively combined with sensory deprivation in antiquity—one on top of the other—to create compelling and unforgettable initiatory experiences. All we would need to do is swap out the "E" (experimenter) here for an "H" (for hierophant). This first method would apply hypnosis during sensory deprivation in order to interrupt, at some perceived optimal time, the initiate's total lack of sensory input with verbal suggestions given by someone outside their ritual confinement (the initiating priest or priestess), even as the initiate remains confined in isolation. To add gravitas to the experience, suggestions given to the incubant could easily take on forms similar to those given subjects during HypnoSleep, with the initiators impersonating the voice of a particular god or goddess (most often Persephone in the case of *katabasis* and visits to her domain in Hades).

A potential irony one immediately notices about this particular method is: once a subject in the depths of sensory deprivation hears someone speaking to them from outside their confinement, is that person really still in sensory deprivation? The answer of course would be no, not technically; but the phenomena produced—and the visuals projected during what was "purely" sensory deprivation—might well continue. The mind is now given access to outside stimulation by way of a verbal induction conducted from outside, consisting of suggestions in the form of a guided narrative; at which point descriptions given to the subject automatically transform into suggestions—suggestions that can be spontaneously visually projected and executed in virtual reality onto the mind's eye.

In a hypnotic state, guided visualizations presented as vividly real by a skilled hypnotic initiator can become powerful suggestions initiates simultaneously experience for themselves as they follow along with what is said in real time.

Method 2—Pre-programmed with Post-Hypnotic Suggestions

The creation of sensory-deprivation experiences capable of convincingly simulating round-trip voyages to mythic and imaginal realms can potentially be hypnotically pre-programmed using post-hypnotic suggestions. This means that, under hypnosis, the subject is told beforehand who and what he will encounter during his experience in sensory deprivation, possibly along with pre-installed triggers to look out for along the way. The expectations thus installed must be sufficient to provide a coherent narrative sequence which the subject is able, through pre-programming, to self-initiate and then self-fulfill during periods of sensory deprivation. In other words, for the effects of sensory deprivation to persist without interruption, the desired suggestions given ahead of time to guide the experience must be converted to auto-hypnotic suggestions to be appropriately self-triggered by the incubant during the ordeal. The result, if successful, would be a series of "time-release self-executing autosuggestions" that activate themselves without interrupting the total lack of input that accompanies sensory deprivation.

Possible Third Way…

Having said all that, I would be remiss if I failed to mention a brief caveat: It would be a grave mistake to underestimate the genius of the ancient Greeks in this regard (as in many other areas of inquiry regarding them). *It is possible* there were exceptional individuals, prodigies trained in the art of visualization, who were able to independently create and follow their own personal "itineraries" when it came to exploring imaginal topographies using out-of-body experiences. Theoretically, those virtuosos who had achieved mastery of arcane visualization disciplines, possibly including complex mnemonic systems and "memory palaces," would be able to project those onto the experience so as to make them serve as a kind of mental scaffolding and referential framework to guide the otherwise random effects of sensory deprivation towards specific, predetermined mystical goals.

What we don't know…

When it comes to the facts surrounding subterranean incubation, we are given clues as to the what, who, when, and why, but what is entirely missing is the "how." For example, how was it determined whether an incubant would have a profound unitive experience as opposed to a much different initiatory death ordeal? How was the incubant prepared for his experience? How was he guided, if at all, during the experience? How were these incubations conducted? With, or without the assistance of sacramental drugs? Was hypnosis also used in the ways we have touched upon here?

What we do know…

Given this dearth of information (which is most likely due to the strict secrecy surrounding such rituals), what we are left with—what we do know—brings us back full-circle to where we started at the beginning of this chapter: the intersection of the *katabasis* of Parmenides (as described in his work *On Nature*) and the amazing finds made during the excavations of his Eleatic philosophical school in Velia. The archaeological artifacts found there contribute much more to bringing all this back to life for us than any mere textual testimonies ever could.

“This cryptoporticus…constitutes precious archaeological testimony to the catabasis of the philosophers.”

—Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind.* Oxford University Press. p.193.

Parmenides, Apollo, and his *Katabasis* in “On Nature”

As we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the discovery of Parmenides’ philosophic association in Velia, and the inscriptions that name him as the first *pholarchos* (“Lord of the Den”) to preside there, have greatly broadened our modern understanding of Parmenides, *katabasis*, and his philosophical approach. Like the followers of Asclepius, Parmenides and his fellow Eleatic philosophers[87] (who included Zeno of Elea, Melissus of Samos, and sometimes Xenophanes of Colophon) considered themselves *iatroi* (healers). This*, despite the fact that the philosophical society in Elea “was not a medical training establishment.”*[88] However, their divine patron was not Asclepius but the god Apollo Oulios—an even older deity of healing who was worshiped in western Anatolia, and was in Greek mythology the father of both Asclepius and Orpheus.

However, this Apollo Oulios was not your usual Apollo—happy-go-lucky god of sunlight, song, and poetry. No, this was a darker, much older, more somber version of Apollo—a god of prophecy. The name Oulios attached to this version of Apollo meant something like “deadly,” “cruel,” or “destructive”, reflecting Apollo’s lesser-known destructive side. But the rationale for an Apollo with a name like this being a god of healing is also explained by an additional meaning: “He who makes things whole.”[89] So Apollo, as the god who sometimes rained the arrows of disease and plagues on hapless mortals with his bow (*toxon* in Greek, from which we derive our modern word “toxic”), was logically also the god capable of reversing such situations and relieving those who suffer from the same maladies he was believed to inflict on humankind.

Ironically, Parmenides’ fundamental contributions to the otherwise rational endeavors of logic and being were acquired (according to him) by divine revelation.

Though Parmenides is nowadays considered "The Father of Logic," his fundamental contributions to the otherwise rational endeavors of logic and being were acquired (according to him) *by divine revelation*, the knowledge of which he claimed to have personally received as a gift from Persephone, the goddess of the underworld, during his mystical experience. His writings are his recounting, in the poetic form known as dactylic hexameter, of his *katabasis* and how, at its end, the goddess commanded him to bring the knowledge she had given him back to the realm of mortals.

"The mares that carry me as far as longing can reach rode on, once they had come and fetched me onto the legendary road of the divinity that carries the man who knows through the vast and dark unknown."

—Parmenides, First lines of "On Nature."

So begins his poem: carried away in a chariot pulled by two mares, he is accompanied by the daughters of the Sun who had left the "Mansions of the Night" to persuade Dike, the goddess of justice, to open the doors to the underworld for him. After being let in, he is kindly welcomed by the goddess herself (presumably Persephone), who reveals to him what he needs to know and bring back to the surface with him for the enlightenment of the living.

"I will do the talking; and it's up to you to carry away my words once you have heard them."

—The Goddess commands Parmenides, from *On Nature*

His poem, then, is presented as a faithful transcription of what the goddess told him while he was in the underworld. Although the extant fragments of Parmenides's poetic work have been around for a long time, clues as to the exact method by which he supposedly obtained this privileged information have been lacking. Although we still don't know the exact techniques he used, what the archaeological evidence recovered from Velia seems to show is that his *katabasis* was an out-of-body experience enabled by incubation, and facilitated by extended isolation and sensory deprivation.

Those familiar with Parmenides's *On Nature* know that it has long been considered a difficult text to make sense of and translate, and also how counter-intuitive its conclusions are: that there is only unchanging being—that all change, motion, and movement are illusions—because *"all is one."* However, as we have seen, it's possible that the revelation Parmenides had of the ultimate oneness of everything in his *On Nature* may really have had more to do with undergoing a profound unitive experience of the type commonly triggered by sensory deprivation, than with anything any goddess had to say.

The kind of incubation conducted by Parmenides was much different than what was practiced in the temples of Asclepius; it was not "cave incubation" *per se*, since Parmenides and his followers did not use caves for this purpose. Instead, they built a sacred precinct (the cryptoporticus) underneath their association complex which served the same purpose as the caves of old, except it was designed and built to their own specifications so as to be ideal for the activities being carried out there.

But what was meant by "den" in the title "Lord of the Den"? It refers to the sort of den or lair where animals hibernate; thus, they apparently thought of the incubation they were practicing as similar or analogous to what animals do when they hibernate in darkness and stillness, often without food or drink, over long periods of time.

"The discovery of the cryptoporticus in the Elean complex is highly significant. It was constructed to accommodate activities carried out underground by an association headed by 'pholarchs,' 'Lords of the Den.'"

—Yulia Ustinova (2009), p.192–193.

This rare and fortuitous convergence of text and artifact allows us to say with confidence that this kind of incubation was practiced by Parmenides himself, and that the resulting *katabasis* he experienced ultimately became his seminal work, *On Nature*.

Peter Kingsley, Parmenides, and Cave Incubation

Fig. 51 Peter Kingsley

Scholar, mystic, and author Peter Kingsley has made Parmenides and this type of ancient Greek incubation the focus of his life-long career, with a very successful record of books published,[90] a series of video lectures, and even live courses offered to the public that offer exercises he says approximate what ancient incubants like Parmenides were trying to accomplish. His commercial ventures aside, he seems to be very sincere and passionate about using his findings as a way to introduce ancient Western values back into the popular consciousness from which they originally arose.

"In recent years, P. Kingsley has developed his views in two books addressed to the general public; some of the ideas he puts forward there seem farfetched and lack proper argumentation."

—Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind.* Oxford University Press. p.191, n.103

Among Kingsley's claims worth noting here, is that the works of the pre-Socratic philosophers Parmenides and Empedocles were written as initiatory texts (which I believe he may very well be correct about). He points out Parmenides' use of repetitive hypnotic techniques in his poem, and says that incubation was "utter stillness" and an entrance to a state of consciousness he describes as neither sleep nor waking.[91] According to

Kingsley, incubants entered a “state of suspended animation” until they had a dream of going to the underworld and back; this, he claims, allowed the incubant access to a “fourth state of consciousness” he describes as “consciousness itself.”

With all due respect to Mr. Kingsley, it is unfortunate that someone with such great scholarly academic credentials should be so ignorant of trance and hypnosis as to make them his main topic of discussion without ever mentioning them. That such methods he describes were practiced is probable, but the evidence he offers for this is flimsy. It is also unfortunate that none of the pioneers of hypnotism and exotic trance states mentioned so far have as yet discovered this trance state he claims is “consciousness itself.” Perhaps Mr. Kingsley should stick to his classical studies instead of trying to reinvent and replace what is already known by hypnotists and trance researchers with gross and uninformed metaphysical speculations of his own. Apparently, part of his marketing strategy has been to categorize the effects of this kind of incubation as something above and beyond our scrutiny and possible analysis—as a unique phenomenon in a category all its own, *which it’s surely isn’t.*

CHAPTER
19

CHAPTER 19: Ancient Psychological Phenomena —The Daemon

"Zeus has placed by every man a guardian, every man a daemon, to whom he has committed the care of the man; a guardian who never sleeps, is never deceived. God is within, and your daemon is within."

—Epictetus *Dissertation I*, 14, 14

Pretty much everyone has heard about the idea of the guardian angel assigned to each of us, a Catholic doctrine since the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. The idea that everyone is born with a divine guide and protector who is always looking out for them is not, however, a Christian invention; rather, it was an idea borrowed from the Greeks, who called it the *daimon* (or often called *daemon* in its Latin spelling). The same belief was also strongly held by the Romans, who called this guide their "genius" (from which modern English has derived our word for someone with an especially intelligent spirit).

The daimon is not, however, to be confused with our modern term "demon," a derivation of it adopted by the early Christians later on as a pejorative term meant to recast all the old pagan gods as evil entities opposed to God.

Although as a concept it existed earlier, the idea of the daemon was originally popularized by Plato's description of Socrates' tutelary personal spirit, which guided him throughout his life.

"I have a divine or spiritual sign which Meletus has ridiculed in his deposition. This began when I was a child. It is

a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything."

—Plato's *Apology*: 8, C

It should be pointed out that the term *daimon* was not restricted to the guardian-angel type; it was also applied to any of the intermediary spirits that stood between humans and the gods. Diotima explains their role in Plato's *Symposium* …

“They act as interpreters and conveyers of human things to the gods, of divine things to men… Occupying a place between the two, they fill up a gap and cause the whole universe to be a coherent whole… A god has no immediate relation with a man, all converses between men and gods, whether in a waking state or in sleep, takes place through the Daemon-kind.”

—Plato’s *Symposium,* 202 E

But the Greek philosophers came to believe that the gods were above the kinds of shenanigans ascribed to them in their myths, and were morally unable to associate with lowly mortals:

“Gods are completely good; they deal only in ‘the good,’ not in ‘good and evil.’ They are characterized by moderation, adequacy, excess in nothing, complete self-sufficiency. Daimons, on the other hand, exist at different levels of moral rectitude.”

—Plutarch, *On the Failure of Oracles*, 413, E-F

Not only did daemons serve as intermediaries between gods and humans, Kronos himself appointed them to rule over men—“So the god [Kronos], in his kindness to man, did the same; he set over us the superior race of *daemones*."[92] Yet daemons, unlike the aloof and perfect gods but similar to human beings, could lie anywhere on the spectrum between good and bad.

Having said that, the type of daemon we are concerned with here was, like the one Socrates had, of the personal kind. Such daemons were said to communicate at times audibly, and at other times directly with the mind of a person without the use of any vocalisms (something like telepathy). But others believed that the daemon didn’t talk to everybody—that its communications were so subtle they passed through unnoticed by most, and only the holiest of men could sense and decipher its messages. This kind of personal daemon tried to better its assigned human, to educate his or her soul and lead it upward to more and more virtue.

“For after death, as they say the daemon of each individual, to whom he belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together, whence after judgement has been given they pass into the world below, following the guide, who is appointed to conduct them from this world to the other: and when they have received their due and remained their time, another guide brings them back again after many revolutions of ages.”

—Plato, *Phaedo,* 107d

In a way, Socrates' type of daemon functioned very much like a personal emergency enunciator—kind of like when a jet pilot is repeatedly told by the onboard warning system “Your left engine is on fire, your left engine is on fire…” in a nagging female voice (which is intentional; apparently, they found that male pilots were more responsive to that particular kind of voice —Surprised?). It cannot answer questions or elaborate further on the situation at hand—the pilot must just heed and immediately respond to its warnings right there and then *without question* .

This explains what Socrates saw as one of its outstanding features, that his daemon only spoke to him *in order to deter him from doing something*, and its terse admonitions never supplied him with any details or reasons why. And remarkably, *it never incited him to do anything,* only *not to do* something. He obeyed it blindly and without question, and eventually his friends wouldn’t proceed to do anything important without consulting it first; but if the daemon did not favor the questioner, it would remain silent no matter what Socrates did.

Moreover, in Plato’s *Timeaus* (90A), the daemon is said to be the highest part of the human soul, within us *but beyond our conscious awareness* ; yet it was never claimed (until very much later) that its predictions were anything we would call paranormal. It seems it was regarded more as an innate component of the psyche—still mysterious, but not really mystical as we understand the term.

“God is within, and your daemon is within.”

—Epictetus, *Dissertation I*, 14, 14

A remarkable feature of Socrates' daemon was how it seemed in many ways to have an independent personality and intelligence different from his own. It preferred some of Socrates' friends over others, for example. This sounds a lot like a modern description of the subconscious mind—that it can think and act independently from our conscious awareness, yet even more than that…

"…such a daemon participates in everything with close attention, inspecting everything and understanding everything, and dwelling in the inmost sanctum of the human mind in the function of consciousness itself…a personal guardian, an individual governor, an inspector in the household, a personal supervisor, an inner attorney, a continuous overseer…"

—Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates*, 16.155

This description matches well the functions assigned to the "hidden observer" postulated by researcher Ernest Hilgard in his neodissociation theory of hypnosis (chapter 5). For the human mind to maintain two opposite beliefs at the same time, it must have an overarching aspect that monitors all of its functions and memories simultaneously—both conscious *and* subconscious. Like a constant overseer, the hidden observer seems to be aware of all our thoughts and memories, whether they are current or stored in the mind; and it is hidden in the sense that like the daemon, it runs silently in the background while monitoring everything both inside and outside.

Although the following example has been used to demonstrate the vigilance of the subconscious mind, it may very well be even more applicable to the duties of the hidden observer:

While you sleep at night, many noises occur around you that are familiar and innocuous—cars going by, noises from the refrigerator going off and on, the creaks your house makes as it expands with the heat of the day and then contracts at night, and so on. *None of these noises will wake you up from your sleep* .

But if you happen to hear some unfamiliar scratching noises coming from the window in your bedroom while you're sleeping, your mind will immediately get the meat up and walk you over to check it out and make sure everything is okay. *It never sleeps* , it's always watching out for you *even while you're sleeping.*

Perhaps, like the personal daemon, the hidden observer is reluctant to talk (after all, it has a lot of stuff it constantly needs to do and keep tabs on —so no time to chitchat); yet in times of immanent or existential danger, it will briefly emerge to verbalize a warning to the conscious mind without any further elaboration.

I personally experienced something like this once myself while driving down the fast lane on a freeway late at night—I heard a voice out of nowhere clearly say to me "Get out of this lane now!" I had been driving all by myself, and for some reason (maybe due to the seeming urgency of the voice) I reflexively obeyed and pulled out of the fast lane. Just a few seconds later, around a bend, I passed a car that had stalled in the lane I had just been in for one reason or another. Had I not quickly responded to the voice's warning and immediately pulled out from the fast lane, I would have surely run into the stopped car and possibly been killed, given how fast I was going. To this day, I do not attribute this to anything paranormal or supernatural, but to the inner genius within me that always remains aware even when "I" am not. There are many famous people and celebrities (ancient and modern) with similar anecdotes, of whom Socrates remains the best known for having described this phenomenon in detail as something that regularly occurred to him.

CHAPTER
20

CHAPTER 20: Theurgy—Becoming God

Our last and final topic for this volume is theurgy , or "divi ne work." This was a Neoplatonic magical-religious movement that started sometime in the second century CE, and lasted until the sixth century and the very end of paganism. Its primary goal was for its followers to "become God," but although lots of writings about its complex doctrines and beliefs have survived, pretty much nothing has come down to us about their means of accomplishing such a lofty goal (although there are clues that allow for some speculation).

From its beginning, Platonism was never just about abstract philosophy; it was a complete way of life. Not all of Socrates' and Plato's teachings were meant for the public; and it is believed that much was held back for those found worthy to be initiated into its deeper secrets. In the same way theurgy, as a product of Neoplatonic teaching, was a logical extension of the esoteric aspects that found expression from the very beginnings of Platonism.

Though these theurgists were not Christians, the term pagan (in the sense of being polytheistic) may not by that time have been entirely applicable anymore, as what was once polytheism was becoming adapted to the monotheistic trends emerging around it in Late Antiquity in the form of "henotheism"—the idea of devoting oneself to a single primary god that unified everything in the cosmos, while still accepting the existence of other divinities and religious entities below him.

On the other hand, by having as a goal "becoming God," theurgy distinguished itself from the "religions of the book" that were ultimately to supplant it (and paganism in general). For the transcendental theism of Judaism and Christianity forbade the idea of possession of a devotee by the

supreme deity, as gods like Yahweh and God the Father always remained aloof, and kept their distance from humankind (except for the Jesus of Christianity, of course).

"…the goal of all these rites is the same: to 'become one' with the deity (henosis, unio mystica). Once you have entered trance, you are no longer the worshiper, you become the deity you worship."

—Luck, Georg (1985). *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds.* The Johns Hopkins University Press. p.7

Perhaps because of the mysteriousness of theurgy, and our lack of any information about the techniques it used for achieving union with God, it remains an obscure subject—unfamiliar or unknown even to many classics students and graduates. Without knowing what methods they actually practiced in the real world to achieve their goals, there is really little left but tedious and abstract doctrines to mull over.

There is also, however, an advanced hypnotic technique that we mentioned and described earlier, one that may serve as an appropriate analog to the kind of methods the theurgists may have employed to "become one with the deity"—that is, *Deep Trance Identification (DTI).*[93]

Fig. 52 Hekate, the triple goddess

Although we can but speculate as to whether the theurgists used a hypnotic technique something like DTI to "become God," we have lots of good information to explore when it comes to their thoughts and methods

regarding possession and divination. This will be examined in Volume II, where we cover the hypnotized mediums used by theurgists for prophecy.

The Greek goddess Hekate played a major part in theurgy. Although she had already been popularly worshipped as the goddess of witchcraft and boundaries, she rose to play a cosmic role in the Chaldean Oracles revered by theurgists in Late Antiquity. The Chaldean Oracles were received as a divine prophecy and compiled by Julian the Chaldean in the second century CE. It is not known if Julian was really a Chaldean (of Babylonian descent), as his name could also be a generic term for "magician," a term popular at the time. Along with his son, Julian the Theurgist, Julian the Chaldean popularized the Chaldean system of the theurgists to become (as the scholar Franz Cumont would come to call it) "the Bible of the Neoplatonists." In that system, it was the goddess Hecate who controlled the daemons that served as mediators between gods and men. These daemons, called "iynges," transmitted information back and forth between the two worlds. To be unified with the divine while still alive, theurgists needed the help and divine dispensation of Hekate to provide them with the correct rituals and knowledge for their ascension to godhead; thus, she was very much a savior figure for them. Although her iynges often did the work on her behalf, she was said to sometimes manifest herself in person to disclose the secret information the theurgist needed and desired.

Fig. 53 Woman with iynx

As an aside, it's interesting to mention a mysterious instrument used by theurgists called "Hekate's iynx," which was a spinning wheel-like device. When turned inwards, it invoked the gods; and when outwards, it dismissed them. Its whirling apparently created a vortex which when spun one way,

towards the spiritual realm, allowed manifestations of the gods to appear. But if the iynx was spun in the opposite way, towards the physical, the gods or summoned entities would disappear.

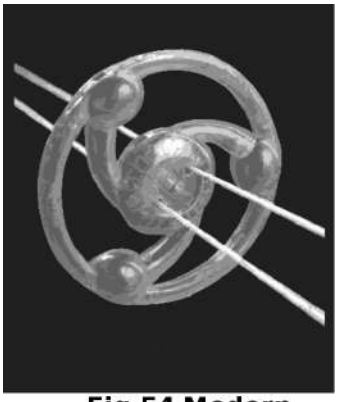

Fig.54 Modern Flywheel Spinner Toy

The iynx was basically a wheel suspended in the middle by a loop of string that was wound up, and then wound and unwound. It emitted a kind of humming sound as it spun back and forth. There were many designs for the iynx in ancient times, but they were all essentially circular discs with two holes in the middle—some simple and some decorously elaborate. It's still sold as a children's toy today, sometimes called a whirligig or spinning flywheel.

Even before the iynx became an important apparatus for theurgical rituals in late antiquity, it was used, as we know from references, in love and weather magic.[94] Its spinning may have functionally served as a source of hypnotic fascination suitable for inductions, much like the stereotypical hypnotic spiral that is still used today.

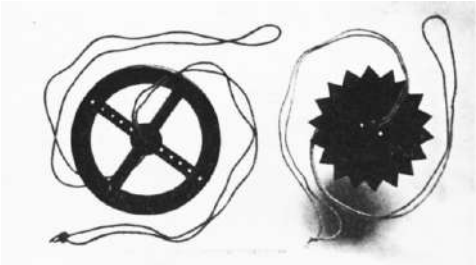

Fig. 55 Reproductions of Iynx Wheels made in the 1930s

We will be looking at the theurgists again in Volume II, when we examine how hypnotism was used by them for prophetic purposes.

Volume I: Conclusions

I hope that this volume has provided everything the non-hypnotist reader needs to know in order to recognize instances of trance and hypnosis in the ancient texts we have reviewed here, and will continue to examine further in Volumes II and III.

I also hope that you, the reader, have realized how hypnosis is much more than just the traditional type cultivated in the West since Mesmer—it is widespread, perennial, and inevitable. Although induction techniques and explanations of the mechanisms behind hypnotic phenomena vary widely from place to place and from time to time, trance is such a ubiquitous feature of being human that we can be sure it was known and used in ancient times to varying degrees.

Now that we have put forward the fundamental ideas behind hypnosis and trance, and the challenges involved in finding evidence for them in our ancient texts, the tone will change significantly in the following two volumes. There have been a few references here to stage hypnotism, but this will come to the forefront in Volume II when we examine magicians and their public performances in antiquity; and then again in Volume III, when we look at instances in in the New Testament, and early Christianity, of hypnosis that is most closely akin to stage hypnotism.

As well as ancient magicians and magic, Volume II will focus on the possible uses of hypnotism in the practice of ancient mystery religions, as well as demonstrating how hypnosis would have been a natural and necessary adjunct to the use of sacramental psychotropic drugs. A special section on the mechanics of belief, and how they intersect with hypnosis, will further elucidate for the reader why hypnotism is so effective at doing what it does.

Finally, in Volume III, we will examine the hypnotic elements found in instances of possession and resurrection. Of special interest will be the story of Lazarus in light of the ground-shaking discovery of the "Secret Gospel of Mark" by Morton Smith; and how Jesus' public performance of miracles, and the types of miracles he performed, relate to techniques used in modern stage hypnotism. I will not be the first to suggest that Jesus used hypnotic techniques to accomplish the miracles attributed to him by the authors of the gospels; but new evidence and insights will be presented to reinforce this hypothesis (as well as a comprehensive list of answers to the many objections raised against such an idea).

In the meantime, I strongly urge you to go ahead and enjoy watching a stage hypnotism show, either live or online, if you haven't already. Not only will you be rewarded by the illuminating and miraculous responses you will see and hear from the onstage volunteers, but they are almost always guaranteed to be hilarious and very entertaining…

EPILOGUE

Trance in the fields of theology, classics, and history

Classical, theological, and historical studies share the same need for a unified, interdisciplinary approach to trance.

There are countless scholarly books written about initiation, mystical states, celestial ascensions, and so on. All of these experiences require some form of trance. Yet most of these books *never even mention "trance" or "hypnosis" in their indexes* !

There are a few exceptions: Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem, theologian Morton Smith, and a few others. The eminent classical scholar E.R. Dodds was a hypnotist himself. To his credit, he included his knowledge of hypnotism in his works and explanations of ancient Greco-Roman religion and culture.[95] But almost all other authors and researchers in these fields mostly ignore the experiential foundation of trance ultimately behind the phenomena they are writing about.

Scholars, who don't understand what trance is, what it can and can't do, or the mechanisms behind it, cannot reliably recognize it or treat it accurately in their area of study. The negative consequences of this can be

seen in works wherein the major topic is some trance-related phenomenon, and the authors seem to make things up as they go, ignoring the fact that much is already known about their "new discoveries."[96]

A new inter-disciplinary, non-compartmentalized, generalist overview is needed.

This gap between scholars and the trance phenomena underlying their subject matter needs to be filled with an entirely new interdisciplinary approach. All of these fields need ways to address this disconnect, and to make trance research a congruent part of the general knowledge base.

A good precedent to follow would be the establishment, back in the 1980's, of archeoastronomy, which closed the gap between archaeology and astronomy. Prior to that, archaeologists were finding sites that were obviously aligned to objects in the night sky; yet they lacked the astronomical know-how to figure out what those alignments were. That knowledge was necessary in order to even begin to understand the cultural meanings behind the buildings they constructed.

Today, a similar approach is needed for trance studies. There needs to be some new interdisciplinary hybrid, with one foot in trance and the other in whatever scholarly discipline is examining the subject matter that includes trance. Only then can we begin to bridge this glaring knowledge gap, and the gross compartmentalization that has prevented a truly comprehensive and proper study of such matters.

But it may be that the biggest impediment in the way of something like that happening lies with hypnotists themselves. After two and a half centuries, so many still can't tell the difference between hypnosis and the metaphysical pseudo-sciences they tend to conflate it with—basically the same old mesmeric claptrap; yet there remains the abiding hope that at some point, someone will show these guys the door and purge the practice of hypnotism of such charlatans for good. Only then will hypnosis be worthy of becoming a mainstream academic discipline…

A major goal of this book, then, is to initiate and encourage a more interdisciplinary and collaborative approach regarding trance, hypnosis, and

any disciplines that refer to or include trance in their studies—all with the expectation that someday hypnosis will finally achieve its status as a full-fledged academic discipline of its own that it has long struggled to deserve.

APPENDIX I Music *is* Hypnosis

Ever find yourself completely *mesmerized* by the performance of your favorite musician? Did you ever think that you were just *enchanted* by music that succeeded in *capturing your imagination* , or were you simply *enthralled* by the almost magical sounds that left you *spellbound* ? Maybe you were so *transfixed* by the musical message unfolding before you that you became *entranced* by it, to the point that you seemed to just get *lost in the music,* forgetting about the passage of time and everyone around you? Perhaps you've heard, or even danced to, the *hypnotic* pulsations that propel the *captivating* rhythms of *t rance* music?

These common usages are more than just mere figures of speech, especially when one realizes that they occur *almost exclusively in reference to music*; and p retty much every one of us has heard, read, and used them ourselves. So, the essential similarities between hypnosis and music have

really been obvious, and a part of us throughout our entire lives—linguistically embedded within the everyday ways we talk about music. All it takes is a brief and careful examination of the words we commonly use to describe it, for us to recognize the strong connections we naturally make between music and trance.

The way you may have felt when you happened to find yourself enraptured by music you especially love to hear, is exactly how hypnosis generally feels—really, really good! Why then do we (subconsciously) use trance terminology for music? Because, as you will come to realize, *music is hypnosis,* or at least a kind of trance similar to hypnosis that doesn't really require any of the kind of verbal suggestions that hypnosis does (although song lyrics can end up serving the exact same purpose).

Now, let’s go ahead and take the idea that music is hypnosis to an even higher level, by posing a few more questions: If music is hypnosis, and it’s the musician who takes people into that beautiful state of trance, then doesn’t that make him or her *a kind of hypnotist* ? If so, then one of the most important skills for becoming a successful musician turns out to be *the ability to create musical trance within others* . Indeed, more than a few musicians have been intuitively aware of this fact for some time…

“...I can explain everything better through music. You hypnotize people to where they go right back to their natural state, which is pure positive-like childhood when you got natural highs. And when you get people at weakest point, you can preach into the subconscious what we want to say. That's why the name 'electric church' flashes in and out”

—Jimi Hendrix, interview with Robin Richman "An Infinity of Jimis," *Life magazine*, Oct. 3, 1969).

Perhaps it wasn't just the acid that caused the great "guitar god" Jimi Hendrix to call his breakout band "The Jimi Hendrix Experience." Here is another quote where Jimi Hendrix eloquently explains his understanding of the hypnotic modus operandi behind his music:

"Once you have some type of rhythm, like it can get hypnotic if you keep repeating it over and over again. Most of the people will fall off by about a minute of repeating. You do that say for three or four or even five minutes if you can stand it, and then it releases a certain thing inside of a person's head. It releases a certain thing there so you can put anything you want right inside that, you know. So, you do that for a minute and all of a sudden you can bring the rhythm down a little bit and then you say what you want to say right into that little gap. It's somethin' to ride with, you know. You have to ride with something.' I always like to take people on trips. That's why music is magic"

—Cited by David Henderson in his book *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky: The Life of Jimi Hendrix*, p356

If we take this to its logical conclusion, it turns out that an important requirement for being a successful musician is *having the ability to consistently evoke musical trance within others.*[97]

Music, then, is much more than just a socially-acceptable art form—it's "hypnosis without words." In fact, the effects of music are deliberately intended to guide the listener into a trance state that resonates with the trance generated by, and within, the performer. Research has shown that humans are genetically pre-wired to respond to music,[98] often by entering into a trance; and that music is fundamental to language acquisition.[99] It's a kind of trance we naturally learn to love from birth, that both attracts us and encourages our participation.

At the very beginning of hypnosis in the West, Anton Mesmer routinely used music to induce trance for the purpose of healing. Songs are indeed inductions of a sort, their lyrical content taking on the role suggestions play when a hypnotist does his thing.

One of the better-known hypnotic aspects of music is regression—the ability to bring back vivid memories from a previous time of one's life. Hypnotists can use trance to allow someone to remember events from his or her past that would normally elude conscious recall. This is particularly useful when a hypnotherapist needs the patient to go back in time and find when a problem first started and what started it so it can then be fixed.

Music as well is famous for being able to take us instantly back to when a particular song was a part of our lives, often to exciting times in our youth when we had fallen deeply in love with someone.[100] "They're playing our song!" is a familiar response when a couple happens to hear a song that was played during their wedding long ago. On the other hand, we may change a song to something else if it brings back bad memories we would rather forget.

A musician's skill is ultimately measured by his or her ability to take people into trance with music.

So, the sharing of a kind of hypnotic trance experience with others is a necessary part of our definition of music. In fact, we automatically distinguish music from noise by whether it sounds like it was intended to

Fig. 56 Jimi Hendrix

generate trance or not! If we do not perceive this intention in the sounds we hear (aside from regular human speech), we automatically classify those sounds as random racket or mere noise.

"Anyone who can remain objective while attending a pop concert may sense the strongly religious quality of the gathering. The musicians are worshipped with an intensity and zeal that reflect their esteemed role as trance providers."

— Schumaker, John F. (1995). *The Corruption of Reality: A Unified Theory of Religion, Hypnosis, and Psychopathology.* Prometheus Books. pg.172.

By taking people out of themselves and guiding them into a unique musical soundscape, the musician becomes the audience's hypnotic guide. Sure, what a musician is saying doesn't necessarily need words to communicate; but like a hypnotist, the musician is giving us suggestions… almost magical non-verbal suggestions that hint at moods and feelings that can be as profound as the deepest philosophical discussion. In fact, audiences often unconsciously expect musicians to mesmerize them so that they can willingly follow them, whether their music leads them to the loftiest heights of serious self-reflection, or to the deepest depths of intense sensuality. Like magicians, musicians are able to use their music to conjure up vivid colors on a palette the listener cannot possibly see; to release secret memories of internal worlds that have never been visited before, summoning up fantastic sensations that pulse and reverberate in mysterious ways we all somehow love to feel and share together.

The reader should be able to appreciate by now why music plays such an important role in all kinds of trance and trance-related phenomena: from a shaman rhythmically hitting two sticks together while humming a tune, to getting lost and totally absorbed during a full-blown orchestral performance, the intended results are pretty much the same—the induction and sharing of trance along with all the enjoyable effects a listener normally looks forward to. And even if it's not used as the primary generator for whatever trance is being evoked, music is nearly always ever-present to help maintain the state for the trancers/listeners. Indeed, the trance effects of music are universal, although the origins and causes of the trances they generate can differ widely across time and cultures.

Hendrix's statement that "music is magic" is really nothing new—ancient peoples already recognized this same equivalence long ago—keeping in mind that in general, hypnosis for them *really was* magic.

APPENDIX II *Ancient Greek Music—The Power to Heal, The Power to Cause Insanity*

"The expression for 'making music' and 'prophesying' were identical in ancient Greek."

— Ulrich and Pisk (1963). *A History of Music and Musical Style.* Harcourt, Brace and World. p.15

Although they are required reading for many a university student, few know that the ancient Greek tragedies *were actually operas* with accompanying musical scores. Several lines of the chorus of Euripides' *Orestes*, a tragedy produced in 408 BCE, with an accompanying musical notation have survived as evidence that this is so. In the same way, few know that ancient Greek temples and statues were not originally marble-white in color, but painted in what we might now consider brash and garish

colors.

Similarly, although everyone has heard of the Olympic Games which were revived in the 19th century and have expanded to become a world-wide spectacle, few people know nowadays that some of the other recurring athletic games of ancient Greece also included highly-celebrated musical competitions. The immense popularity of these "musical Olympics" rivaled the enthusiasm shown for the athletic competitions they accompanied.

The Pythian Games at Delphi, for example, were first held in the eighth century BCE in honor of Apollo, the god of music. Apollo killed the Python, a kind of dragon-like serpent that guarded what the Greeks considered to be the *omphalos* ("belly button") or center of the world at Delphi. After Apollo supplanted the Python and took over its worship there, he set up his own oracle in its place. Thus began the famous Oracle of Delphi, presided over by his special priestess called the Pythia in memory of his defeated foe. Up until the sixth century BCE, the only events held there were musical competitions, after which athletic and equestrian competitions were added.

Fig. 57 Kithara or Greek Lyre

The most popular Greek musical instruments in these contests were the *kithara* (Greek lyre) and the *aulos* (Greek double flute). Since the Pythian Games were a celebration of Apollo's defeat of the giant serpent Python, the musical performances were designed to mimic the battle of Apollo over the dragon, including the death rattles of Python at the very end as he died in defeat. People from all around Greece flocked to Delphi to compete in or watch the musical games, bringing lots of tourist dollars into the city.[101]

Fig. 58 Greek Aulos (Double

One can only imagine the caliber of the performances that the best musicians of the Greco-Roman world had to offer; but ancient Greek music would have sounded a little "off" to our modern ears, as it was played using "just tuning" (which uses Pythagorean perfect ratios—perfect physics-wise). Up until a couple hundred years ago or so, one needed to play a C-tuned violin when playing in the key of C, and then switch to an A-tuned violin for playing something in the key of A, for example. It was not until even-tempered tuning was adopted (which shifted all notes in a compromise such that most all of them no longer matched the notes found in just tuning) that we had the kind of

modern musical sound we are familiar with today—allowing any instrument to be played in *any* musical key.

This revolutionary and expedient compromise meant that musical notes and scales no longer reflected the perfect proportions and musical ratios originally propounded by Pythagoras, and the tunings used by ancient Greek musicians. And because we in the West are born and raised listening to even-tempered tuning, listening to songs played using "just tuning" sounds curiously out of tune to modern ears.

The Greeks developed sophisticated musical schemes: pretty much everyone knows that songs played in a minor scale sound "sad", while those in a major scale sound "happy." Even little kids can tell the difference. But there were other scales (or modes) as well, which the Greeks classified according to the emotions each one seemed to evoke in the listener; and they assigned each scale its appropriate applications. Out of the twelve notes available, a mode or scale is a group of seven notes (more or less), each one sounding different from the others just as the familiar major and minor scales do.

In Plato's dialogue *Laches, or Courage*, he calls the Dorian mode the best for general use, because it creates a feeling of sincerity; while in his *Republic* he bans the Ionian and Lydian modes from his perfect society because they were "for drinking, relaxing and soft" with no military applications. The Dorian mode would be permitted for use in war, and the Phrygian for peace and worship; and by limiting the manufacture of lyres to these scales only, he intended to ban all the other scales of which he disapproved (kind of like Big Brother before Orwell!)

Aristotle, however, said in his *Politics* that the Mixolydian mode was sad and sullen; the Dorian mode was the "manliest," and avoided extremes; and the Phrygian mode inspired enthusiasm and evoked emotional excitement. The Lydian and Ionian scales, on the other hand, "made people stupid."

The Greeks divided the physical world into four elements—earth, air, fire, and water; and used these elements to categorize the four bodily fluids (called humors) that needed balancing for a healthy body and mind. Each humor was associated with musical melodies which were thought to

amplify or weaken it, so as to affect the state of the soul accordingly. Presumably, this would enable music to be used for healing, depending on the humor that needed “adjusting” so as to bring the body back into perfect balance and health.

"…the Pythagoreans would employ certain melodies when they wanted to forget their daily cares in sleep, and, upon hearing these, a mild and quiet slumber would fall upon them. In the same manner, upon awakening, they would purge the stupor and confusion of sleep with certain other melodies; for these ancients knew that the total structure of our soul and body consists of musical harmony."

—Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music,* Book I, Introduction

Boethius, a Christian Roman senator and historian (c480-524 CE), recounts in Book I of his work *Fundamentals of Music* the following instances when music was used therapeutically: Pythagoras with an alcoholic young man, under the influence of the Phrygian mode; Empedocles with a violent youth; Terpander and Arion, who saved the citizens of Lesbos and Ionia using song; and Ismenius who cured the Boeotians of their sciatica with his music. Boethius believed that the ratios found in music reflect those that are found in the human body and soul, demonstrating the strong innate bond between people and music.

"…there can be no doubt that the unity of our body and soul seems to be somehow determined by the same proportions that join together and unite the harmonious inflections of music… Hence it happens that sweet melodies even delight infants, whereas a harsh and rough sound will interrupt their pleasure."

—Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music,* Book I, Introduction

The ancient Greeks' discovery of the effectiveness of music and singing for healing and therapeutic purposes is not really surprising since, as the reader has already learned, *music is hypnosis*—and hypnosis often provides an effective way to heal the mind, as well as facilitate the healing of the body.

APPENDIX III Orpheus and Flow

Orpheus, Master Musician of Greco-Roman Mythology

Fig. 59 Orpheus

Nobody was more recognized in the Greco-Roman world as *the* musician/magician *par excellence* than Orpheus, whose music had the power to charm wild beasts, make trees dance, and move giant boulders. In Greek and Roman myth, he

was considered the best musician and poet of all time and had perfected playing the lyre, having been taught by his father, the god Apollo himself, when he was young. His mother was Calliope, who presided over epic poetry and was the head of the muses.

As with many of the other topics we touch upon throughout this book, there's a lot more to be said about Orpheus than what can be presented here—from the "Orphic" mysteries established in his name after his death, to the doctrines associated with them that continued to resonate in the ideas of Plato and others. The inquisitive reader is therefore urged to pursue more information from the many available sources about Orpheus and his followers; but space and time constraints necessitate that only a brief summary be given here—enough to allow a reader unfamiliar with his story to understand the issues relevant to the myth that surrounds him.

The Myth of Orpheus and Eurydice

Fig. 60 Orpheus Playing in Hades

The most iconic story about Orpheus is about how he used the music of his lyre to try to retrieve his wife Eurydice from Hades after she had died: Orpheus hypnotizes Cerberus, the three-headed dog at Hell's gate, in order to gain entrance; he then goes on, with his music, to move even Hades and his queen, Persephone, to accede to his plea. However, his request is granted on one condition: that as he was leading Eurydice out of Hades to the light of day, *he could not turn around and look at her until they reached the surface* and the land of the living. But, right before finally reaching the surface, Orpheus (for reasons that are not totally clear) turns around and looks upon Eurydice, and her shade

returns forever to the underworld. The reader may notice that this myth has some similarities with the Biblical story of Lot's wife, who is turned into a pillar of salt after disobeying the command not to look back as they try to escape the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Fig. 61 Eurydice being returned to Hades by Hermes

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice was often interpreted as a demonstration of the power of love, and that it is best for humanity to abide by the commands of the gods. When Orpheus looks back, he disobeys Hades and loses Eurydice as punishment. Some said that his love was not "true," for which he was afterwards punished by the gods by being torn to pieces by a bunch of crazed female worshippers of Dionysus (Maenads). Afterwards, his lyre was carried off to heaven to become the constellation now known by the same name (Lyra).

The Flow State

“Panta rhei... (Everything flows…)”

—Heraclitus the Obscure, pre-Socratic philosopher

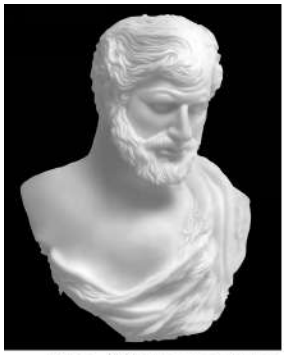

Fig. 62 Heraclitus the Obscure

We must now take the reader in a completely different direction, after which we will again come back to the myth of Orpheus with some interesting insights. We are focusing here on a psychological phenomenon that is not hypnosis, but a naturally-occurring trance state, one that is actually quite familiar to everyone: when you’re so focused and completely absorbed in performing what you're doing, that you completely forget yourself and the passage of time. When it happens, whatever activities you happen to be performing (however complex they might be) seem to operate perfectly and flawlessly all on their own. Furthermore, they do so in ways that would not normally happen while you are consciously engaged in the same activity. In this respect, it is somewhat similar to hypnosis, in that *in the flow state certain things become possible that ordinarily are not.*

The flow state, also known as "being in the zone," was first popularized by the psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi in 1975. Since the practice of hypnosis at the time was mainly confined to subjects going comfortably into trance while relaxing in an over-stuffed lounge chair, it was generally not considered useful for enhancing a person's active physical skillsets; and athletes involved in sports such as golfing, Olympic running, skiing or other physically demanding activities were unlikely to benefit much from being immobilized in deep trance slouched over in a recliner. This was well before the trance state of hyperempiria—which would turn out to be extremely useful for enhancing physical activities—had been discovered and popularized.

But entering "the zone" or flow state *was* found to be very effective and useful for enhancing physical performance when it comes to athletics, sports, and the like. Though not as well-known or popular nowadays, it was all the rage in its time; and many books were published about what the flow state was, how to achieve it, and its various applications. Many books about it continue to be available for the curious reader.

All of us, at one time or another, have found ourselves in a flow state while engaged in some activity. Getting "in the zone" is what Tiger Woods does when he hits that miraculous hole-in-one, and where hockey great Wayne Gretzky was when he made a perfect pass of the puck to someone behind him *he couldn't possibly even see.* It's what happens when you start playing a video game in the afternoon and the next thing you know, it's 3:00 A.M. in the morning. It's what pro skaters, motocross racers, runners, and basketball players experience on their way to a big win. Flow is the key to peak performance at one's highest physical and mental potential (and maybe that's why it feels so good to be there).

Flow is the essence of great musical performance, especially improvisation.

For our purposes here, however, we will be examining how entering and maintaining a flow state can be especially useful for *musicians*. As both a hypnotist *and* a musician, I have often personally experienced such a state myself, as well as learning how to automatically enter it any time at will; so I find myself well-suited for this discussion; and the explanations offered here as to how flow works are solely based on my own observations, and

much different than those found in any other books on the subject. I hope that once we are done, the much simpler (and possibly superior) explanation offered here will allow the reader to understand not only flow, but how it relates back to the myth of Orpheus.

“I'm in a flow, I'm in the zone, there's a definite shift in my consciousness, without desire, without my ego, without me thinking, oh wow, I'm playing great; just experiencing it as a flowing, living moment.”

—Vernon Reid, Guitarist for band “Living Color”

For a musician, let's say a guitarist, being in the flow allows him or her to let the music play itself while just watching as it seems to emerge and unfold perfectly all on its own. They definitely know it's their bodies carrying out all the right moves at lightning speed; but it's as though some genius part of them has taken over and is doing it for them. It's an almost mystical mental state of relaxed focus, where the musician plays 100% "in the moment." It's playing "in the zone," where notes seem to emerge by themselves from under the guitarist's finger tips. In fact, it's a lot like Zen in that it isn't so much about making music, as it is *letting it go*. When guitarists find themselves playing the most awesome notes before they could even know what they're doing—and it happens better, smoother, and faster than if they were consciously thinking about what they are playing—*that's the flow state.*

"It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself."

—Johann Sebastian Bach

Flow is what ancient Greek musicians, orators, and so on prayed for before making appearances onstage—that they could be temporarily possessed and inspired by the muses, and "channel" a stream of perfectly-executed words or musical notes—one right after another—as though from some mysterious higher source.

Now that the reader has some idea of what flow is, it's useful to point out the conditions for entering the flow state; that is, it works best for activities that one already knows how to do, and that do not require a conscious "thinking through." For example, getting in the flow is pretty easy for a gamer who already knows how to play the game, but would be nearly impossible to achieve for someone who has not yet mastered its rules and pitfalls. Similarly, if one did not really know how to play tennis, it would not really be possible for them to achieve a flow state; while for someone who is already a tennis pro it would be fairly easy.

The activity in question must be at least minimally challenging, so as not to cause boredom; and it should have some kind of intrinsic reward of its own like a video game, rather than some dreary repetitive task. Also, it must

be a continuous activity performed over a span of time, rather than something done intermittently or with constant diversions and interruptions.

Have you ever interrupted someone highly focused on performing a continuous activity and doing exceptionally well at it, only to cause them to fumble as their flow of consciousness, and with it their performance, instantly falls apart?

Here is where things get really interesting; because the way to maintain flow is very counterintuitive to how we generally try to perfect our performance of a particular task. For example, if you are working on a complex math problem and run into some difficulty, the natural reaction is to stop and take a look at how well you are doing things and then apply even more conscious effort to the task if necessary—"if at first you don't succeed, try, try again." This tactic works pretty well when it comes to tasks that require conscious "thinking through," like a math problem with a "novelty" factor that must be dealt with in order to proceed. If one is "trying to figure something out," more conscious effort often does the trick; so, applying more effort to a problem is the natural go-to that most of us automatically revert to. But for other continuous activities that one pretty much already knows how to do, more conscious "trying" only makes it harder to improve performance and is actually counterproductive. This is due to the simple fact that *the conscious mind can only do one thing at a time,* unlike the vast subconscious mind which is capable of doing many things at once "faster than 'you' can."[102]

"If you chase two rabbits, you will catch neither one."

—Russian proverb

So, you can either solely focus on the task at hand, or stop to check out how well you're doing; *but you can't do both*, because once you stop to think about how well you're doing, you're "taking the eye off the ball" as it were, and abandoning the flow state for the fraction of a second it takes for it to collapse entirely and immediately disappear.

It is natural for us, when performing an activity, to want to stop and "see how we're doing." We often consider it a kind of "due diligence" on our part to intermittently monitor our own performance, to make sure we're "doing it right." ***This is the big mistake people most often make, which immediately ends being in the flow…***

So how do we "keep an eye" on how we're doing while engaged in a flow state activity? The fact is *you just don't*; rather than increasing conscious involvement, which might work when dealing with a complicated math problem, *one must simply let go entirely of worrying how one is doing*. That's the "Zen" of mastering maintaining operating in the flow state…

In other words, the more one doesn't care about how one is doing, the better the performance in flow.

Most of us are certainly not used to "not caring" about how well we're doing in order to make our performance better, *but there it is*. You have to let go…and get out of your own way to let your genius subconscious mind do it for you—faster and better than you ever could consciously.

Getting back to Orpheus (finally!) and music, the "letting go" required of playing or singing in the flow is extremely important for a musician to perform optimally. A guitarist improvising a "one-off" guitar solo on the fly must let go entirely and just play whatever notes come off his or her fingers next, just letting the fingers "do the talking." The result is a solo that could never be planned—a purely instantaneous inspiration from one of the muses "up there;" and with that immediateness comes a kind of musical sincerity that resonates with the listener in ways that the music could never do otherwise. So, what does this counterintuitive secret for maintaining flow have to do with the myth of Orpheus? Well, a lesson that is possibly precisely meant to reveal this same secret to musicians is embedded within the story of his failed attempt to bring his wife back from death.

At the end of the story, Orpheus is doing pretty well *continuously* charming the inhabitants of Hades on his way back up to the surface, with his wife following right behind him; until, that is, he disobeys the pre-

condition set by Hades to not look back at her until they have reached the surface. Just before Orpheus and his wife look like they are finally going to make it, he apparently loses confidence in what he is doing and feels compelled to stop his ascent for a moment, to turn around and look back to make sure he is doing okay and that his wife is still there behind him. But as soon as he turns around, his wife is immediately whisked back down to Hades and he loses her forever…

The explicit lesson here is obviously not to disobey the gods; but I think there may also be a secret lesson here just for musicians, about *what not to do* if you want to keep playing in a state of flow. Orpheus, just at the moment of success, "takes his eye off the ball" as it were, and the second he does all of his efforts up to that point simply collapse, just as musicians cause their flow state to collapse as soon as they stop, for even a fraction of a second, to think about how well they're doing.

The lesson embedded within the story of Orpheus and Eurydice for musicians is to show metaphorically *what not to do* if a musician wants to play in a continuous and uninterrupted state of flow…

Is this hypothesis farfetched, or does the reader think there is something to this? Could the ancient Greeks have been aware (in their own way) of the flow state and its usefulness for enhancing a musician's performance, and portrayed it by means of a myth? This state differed from possession by the muses, to whom they attributed the divine inspiration that enabled them to put on a great performance; and it seems to me to be such an apt and precise metaphor for how flow collapses, that the similarities could not possibly have been mere coincidence. I can only leave it up to my readers to decide for themselves whether it is or not…

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Glossary

(Volume I)

abaton:

The part of a temple of Asclepius where suppliants went to sleep (incubation) waiting for a dream from the god Asclepius for healing.

age regression (hypnotic):

The ability, under hypnosis, for someone to mentally revert to a younger age or time past (controversial).

analgesia:

Pan relief without the absence of consciousness.

ancient world:

The region around the Mediterranean and the Near East before the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE.

anesthesia:

L oss of physical sensation with or without loss of consciousness

animal magnetism:

The invisible natural energy behind mesmeric phenomena according to Anton Mesmer.

antiquity:

The ancient past, especially the period of Greek and Roman civilizations prior to 500 CE.

artfully vague (hypnosis):

The hypnotic technique of describing things using ambiguous terms which the subject interprets in his or her own personal and particular way

unknown to the hypnotist.

artificial somnambulism/somnambulism:

The optimum level of hypnosis for the production of hypnotic phenomena.

asclepeion:

Temple complex of Asclepius, the largest of which resemble luxury health resorts.

Asclepius:

Greek god of healing

auctoritas:

Level of prestige and influence in Roman society.

aulos:

Greek double flute—one of the most popular of ancient Greek musical instruments.

auto-hypnosis:

The ability of someone to hypnotize themselves or induce themselves into hypnosis, often using pre-installed triggers.

autonomic control (hypnosis):

The ability under hypnosis to control parts or aspects of the body normally beyond conscious control.

BCE (Before Common Era):

New academic term for what was once called B.C. The dates 450 BCE and 450 BC refer to the same year. Compare *CE*.

Bicameral Mind:

Julian Jaynes's hypothetical archaic mentality whereby people received instructions by way of audio hallucinations from the brain's left hemisphere perceived as instructions coming from a god or goddess outside of them.

Blind therapy:

A hypnotic technique in which the hypnotist does not need to know details of the client's problem, and might not even know what it is. Blind therapy relies on the patient's own subconscious knowledge concerning their problem or illness to do the appropriate healing subconsciously, without much intervention by the hypnotist.

Body scan relaxation technique:

A hypnotic induction technique where the subject mentally "scans" his or her entire body part by part to eventually go into hypnosis.

Catalepsy:

State of extreme muscle rigidity attainable using hypnosis.

Cave/subterranean incubation:

A type of incubation used for initiation or mystic experiences performed underground in isolation along with sensory deprivation and, possibly, also hypnosis in some cases.

CE (Common Era):

New academic term for A.D. The dates 450 CE and AD 450 refer to the same year. Compare *BCE.*

Chaldean Oracles:

The "revealed" writings the Theurgists of late antiquity referred to in order to "become one with God."

clinical hypnosis:

Another name for *hypnotherapy.*

coma state:

An old and incorrect name for the Esdaile state, a type of hypnotic trance. See *Esdaile state.*

compounding (in hypnosis):

The process of combining as many inter-reinforcing hypnotic techniques as possible for maximum effect.

confabulation:

Self-created false memories expressed without intent or deceit.

conscious mind:

Those of your mental functions, perceptions, thoughts, self-talk, memories, etc. of which you are aware. This is the "talking" part of your mind. Many people mistake their conscious minds for being the totality of their mental selves, not realizing that their vast and powerful subconscious minds do most of their thinking, deciding, and learning outside their conscious awareness. Compare *subconscious mind.*

contrastive reasoning:

This mental process is temporarily disabled during trance and hypnosis (in particular, *sorting for difference).*

conversational hypnosis:

A covert type of hypnosis wherein hypnotic language is embedded in ordinary conversation capable of inducing hypnosis in ways unknown to the subject.

convincer (hypnotic):

A demonstration of hypnotic phenomena intended to convince the subject that he or she is indeed hypnotized. Sometimes hypnotized subjects do not believe they are hypnotized, that is, until the hypnotist gives them suggestions that they are stuck to their chairs and can't get up. Their subsequent inability to get up from their chairs serves to convince them that they are hypnotized.

Corpus Hermeticum:

A collection of 17 Greek writings traditionally attributed to the legendary Hellenistic figure Hermes Trismegistus popular in Late Antiquity. Mostly mystical dialogues about the true nature of God and the universe, they were

probably written in Roman Egypt during the 1st-3rd centuries CE.

covert suggestion (hypnosis):

Hypnotic suggestions given to someone in such a way that they are unaware they are being given them.

critical factor (hypnosis):

Those functions of the mind that do critical thinking, especially *contrastive reasoning* (noticing mismatches and what *doesn't* fit or make sense). During hypnosis, the critical faculty becomes disabled; this is called *critical faculty bypass*.

cryptoporticus:

A form of Roman architecture that is a semi-subterranean gallery with vaulting that supports portico structures aboveground—in the case of that discovered in Velia, ideal for conducting subterranean/cave-type incubation rites.

daemon (also spelled *daimon*):

a) Intermediaries between humans and the gods. b) The personal "guardian angel" Greek and Roman paganism assigned to every person at birth that is tasked with constantly protecting and guiding a person during his or her lifetime and beyond.

Deep Trance Identification (DTI):

A hypnosis technique whereby the subject "steps into the shoes of someone else" to feel what it's like to be that person and be able to feel what they feel and do what they do—also called modeling. Possibly a technique used by Theurgists to help them achieve the goal of "becoming" a god or goddess.

depth of trance:

A relative (and rather inexact) term referring to levels of trance defined by the kinds of producible trance phenomena available. Although expedient, the concept is a metaphor based on gravity (up and down), a relationship that does not really exist in reality.

demonic possession:

See *possession.*

dissociation:

T he splitting off of information and ideas in the mind such that they continue to exert influence independently of one's conscious awareness (subconsciously)—used as the mind's way of mentally segregating certain thoughts from consciousness to avoid potential disturbances to one's sense of order.

divided consciousness:

Hypothesis that there is a division of consciousness into at least two simultaneous streams of thought, separated by an amnesic barrier, such that someone can hold two (or more) different or even opposite views on the same subject at the same time, but only one stream of thought may be activated and brought to consciousness at any one time while the others are temporarily suppressed, but still there.

DMT (N,N-dimethyltryptamine):

A psychedelic drug, the effects of which are considered more intense than LSD, used in sacramental rituals both now and in ancient times. According to Terrence McKenna, DMT use can sometimes include

encounters with constantly morphing non-organic beings for which he coined the term “machine elves.”

Ebers papyrus:

An ancient Egyptian medical papyrus containing herbal knowledge, dated to circa 1550 BCE. It is among the oldest and most important surviving medical papyri.

Egyptian Book of the Dead:

An ancient Egyptian text which was used from approximately 1550 to 50 BCE, the correct name for which is really *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*.

eidola:

(Greek), an abstract or imagined image, apparition, or phantom.

Elman induction:

The “go-to,” simple hypnotic induction developed by Dave Elman able to take a subject into a state of deep hypnotic somnambulism in only one session.

endogenous:

Self-originated. Created from within, as opposed from outside of oneself.

“energy” healing:

Using non-existent, invisible, and undetectable “subtle” energies to serve as placebos for healing purposes. Commonly used by metaphysical hacks, “New Age” quacks, and other charlatans.

enkoimesis (incubative trance):

The act of sleeping in a temple waiting for healing from a vision, dream, or simulated personal visit from a god (like Asclepius) or goddess.

entrainment:

The natural physiological response of subconsciously matching behavior with rhythms in the environment.

Epicureans:

Followers of Epicurus (341–270 BCE), the first to espouse radical materialism, who looked for natural causes for phenomena and eschewed superstition and religion.

epode:

A form of lyric poetry written in couplets (a long line followed by a shorter one) often sung over the injured and the ill in ancient Greece for healing. A person specializing in singing for healing was called an "epodos."

epodos:

One who sings magical incantations over the sick and injured for relief and healing—not usually considered a magician per se by the ancient Greeks.

Esdaile State (aka Coma State):

An extremely deep hypnotic trance state in which the subject can have all the appearances of someone who is dead. Total anesthesia is a natural by-product of the state. This makes the Esdaile state suitable for performing surgery without any other anesthetics necessary. Formerly (and incorrectly) called the *coma state,* because subjects in the Esdaile state appear to be in a coma. (They aren't.)

even-tempered tuning:

The modern way instruments are tuned so that any music can be played in any key. To enable that, the notes of a scale needed to be slightly shifted and compromised such that they no longer reflected the perfect proportions for tuning innovated by Pythagoras. Compare *just tuning.*

exogenous:

Coming from and/or caused by something or someone outside of oneself.

exotic trance states:

Name for types of trance states that (a) can be induced by a hypnotist, yet (b) differ from *somnambulism*, the type of trance usually achieved in modern Western hypnosis. Each exotic trance state has characteristic features, strengths, and things it can/cannot do. Each still has many of the features found in somnambulism—particularly disabling *contrastive reasoning*. Exotic trance states include *hyperempiria, Ultra Depth, Ultra Height,* and almost certainly others.

eye fixation:

The act of focusing one's eyes on something which, if done intently over a prolonged period of time, causes them to tire and close, eventually inducing hypnosis.

false memory (hypnosis):

A hypnotically implanted memory for something a person did not really do or experience.

fascination:

The ability to capture a person's gaze (see *eye fixation*) such that, if he or she stares at an object until eye fatigue sets, it becomes a "doorway" into trance, eventually inducing hypnosis.

flow state / "The Zone":

A mental state whereby a particular task or action is performed subconsciously without interruption resulting in increased efficiency, a perceived difference in the passage of time, and usually an overall enjoyment for doing an activity that basically seems to "do itself."

gLOC:

Loss of consciousness due to the acceleration of gravity on the body and the brain, typically undergone by pilots and subjects tested in large spinning centrifuges (such as those used to train astronauts to perform under high acceleration situations). Subjects of gLOC routinely recount near-death and out-of-body experiences as a result.

gnosis:

A type of religious sentiment based on knowledge and direct experience instead of faith. The state of gnosis was the Gnostic's overall goal, much as nirvana is for a Buddhist. In the Greco-Roman world, the goal of achieving Hermetic Gnosis became popular in Late Antiquity (though Hermeticism itself is not considered a gnostic religious movement per se, lacking Gnosticism's characteristic hatred of the material world). There were also Jewish and Christian Gnostics at that time, and Islamic Gnostics followed centuries later.

gnostic:

1) A follower of Gnosticism
2) Having to do with Gnosticism.

Gnosticism:

(see *gnosis*).

Greco-Roman:

Relating to the ancient Greeks and Romans

Greek Magical Papyri:

A collection of magical spells, hymns, and rituals dated from the 100s BCE to the 400s CE.

guided meditation:

A common name for what is actually a form of hypnosis. Sadly, most people who experience or guide such sessions don't know they are doing hypnosis. Also called *guided imagery* and *guided visualization*.

hallucination (hypnosis):

See *negative hallucination, positive hallucination.*

Heka:

1. The Egyptian word for magic.
2. The Egyptian god of magic.

Hekate:

The Greek goddess of the crossroads and sorcery. She was often portrayed with three faces and held torches to indicate her nocturnal nature. Although relatively minor compared to the Olympian gods and goddesses, she was commonly allotted an altar of her own inside a household, but in Late Antiquity she was transformed by the Theurgists to become a major cosmic force mediating between the gods and humankind.

Henosis:

Mystical union with the divine or ultimate reality.

henotheism:

The idea that developed and became popular in Late Antiquity that there was one overarching God of all and everything, yet still acknowledging the existence of other gods and goddesses below Him.

Hermes Trismegistus:

Hermes Thrice Greatest, the main and sacred character for Hermetic Gnostics. He was identified with Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom. Many religious texts have survived containing explanatory dialogues conducted by him with other personages. His main goal was to spread enlightenment in the form of gnosis.

Hermetic Texts:

Texts used by pagan followers of Hermes Trismegistus. One called *The Poimandres* is an especially strong candidate for being a hypnotic induction script.

hesychia:

A state of utter inner stillness and silence—a mystical state achieved using subterranean/cave incubation and sensory deprivation rituals.

hidden observer:

A functional part of the mind hypothesized by Ernest Hilgard as being aware of all streams of consciousness and memories happening all at once, all of the time—both conscious and subconscious. Characteristics of the

hidden observer seem to have some similarities with those attributed to the ancient concept of a personal daemon (pagan guardian angel).

hyperempiria:

1. an exotic trance state discovered and developed by hypnotist Don Gibbons. His inductions were intended to “raise” the mind and body, creating a somnambulistic-like trance state without using relaxation. (Relaxation is used in most hypnotic inductions.) Hyperempiria has proven useful for enhancing athletic abilities and sexual pleasure and performance.
2. The style of hypnotic induction used by Gibbons to induce hyperempiria.

hypermnesia:

A bnormally vivid or complete memory or recall of past events.

hypnodelic therapy:

A kind of therapy combining the use of hypnosis and psychedelics to increase overall suggestibility researched briefly during the 1960s.

hypnotic induction:

See *induction.*

hypnosis:

An intentionally induced (not accidental) state of trance, particularly when it induces somnambulism, a trance in which the most useful hypnotic phenomena are producible.

HypnoSleep:

A hypnotic induction technique in which the subject is roused from sleep directly into a hypnotic state, given suggestions, and then allowed to return to sleep without ever awakening. The subject normally has no memory of the episode. HypnoSleep is the strongest candidate for hypnotic technique used on suppliants coming to the sleep temples of Asclepius for healing.

hypnotherapy:

The use of hypnosis for psychological healing and behavior modification in a clinical one-on-one setting. The field was primarily established by hypnotist Dave Elman in his book *Hypnotherapy*. Hypnotherapy is one of the two main types of modern Western hypnosis, the other being *stage hypnosis.*

hypnotic language:

Language using linguistic techniques specially designed to induce hypnosis.

hypnotic phenomena:

Types of behaviors and responses producible by someone in hypnosis, many impossible to perform while in a normal awake state of consciousness.

hypnotic regression:

See *regression.*

hypnotism:

The process of inducing *hypnosis,* which is an artificially induced trance.

hypnotizability/suggestibility:

A person's ability to be hypnotized to accept and implement suggestions presented by a hypnotist.

iatromantis:

(doctor-prophet) The title of priests who administered to incubants at the temples of Asclepius.

incantation:

A magic spell, usually softly sung, performed for healing.

incubant:

A person who slept in a sleep temple to receive healing. See *incubation.*

incubation:

The act of sleeping in a temple to receive a cure from a god or goddess.

induce:

1) to move by persuasion or influence.
2) to call forth or bring about by influence or stimulation (to guide a person or persons into trance or hypnosis).

induction (hypnosis):

A process using specially designed techniques to guide someone into trance or hypnosis.

initiation:

A ceremonial ritual a person undergoes to experience important spiritual truths or revelations, after which the successful initiate is usually permitted to join or advance within a secret or obscure society or group.

initiatory death (sometimes called "ecstatic death" or "mystic death"):

A ritual wherein the initiate undergoes a simulated death ("dying before you die")—sometimes characterized as a super intense anxiety attack.

iynges:

The name of the intermediaries between men and the gods in Theurgical writings and rituals.

iynx:

A spinning whirligig-like device that makes a whirring sound used in Theurgy to summon and banish entities (also called *Hecate's iynx).*

just tuning:

Tuning for musical instruments developed by Pythagoras. It used perfect proportions to determine the notes in a scale. Up until only a few hundred years ago this was the standard tuning used for all musical instruments. An instrument using just tuning had to be tuned for only one key; it could not be used to play in any other key as instruments are tuned today. Compare *even-tempered tuning.*

katabasis:

A "going down" in Greek, one of its meanings referring to a journey to Hades and back.

kithara:

The Greek lyre, with the aulos one of the two most popular musical instruments in the Greco-Roman world.

kline:

A kind of bedstead or camp-bed on which incubant suppliants in the temple slept.

Late Antiquity:

Approximately 250 CE to 750 CE.

linear trance model:

Traditional model of trance based on depth (up and down metaphor), now seemingly obsolete due to the discovery of exotic trance states that no longer support it.

lucid dream:

A dream in which one "awakens" in the dream and realizes that one is dreaming. This allows the dreamer to take control of what happens during

the dream to some degree. Some people naturally have lucid dreams. Becoming aware during dreams can be learned as a skill.

matching reasoning:

The mental ability to progress from general ideas to specific conclusions. You use it when thinking "If *this* is true, what is *also* true?" (Also includes *matching for sameness)*.

medium (person):

Someone supposedly capable of mediating communication between the living and spirits, most often spirits of dead people.

mesmerism:

The name for hypnotism when it was discovered by Anton Mesmer whose effects he attributed to "animal magnetism" and other occult causes. Mesmerism became hypnotism when James Braid discovered that the trance states generated by the mesmerists were produced by natural causes, and not metaphysical ones as was believed.

metaphysics:

Abstract theories with no basis in reality (pseudoscience).

miracle:

By definition, the absolute very least possible explanation for anything that happens.

Mithras:

Ancient Persian god of light and truth opposed to evil whose worship became popular, especially among solders, in the military of the late Roman Empire.

multiple personality disorder (MPD):

A psychological condition characterized by a person displaying more than one (primary) personality, which in the ancient past would have been universally regarded as symptoms of demonic possession..

musical mode/scale:

Different configurations of seven or more notes out of the total twelve notes available in an octave systematized by the ancient Greeks according to the different moods and feelings expressed by each one (like major vs. minor scales, for example).

necromancy:

Conjuring or otherwise communicating with the dead for prophetic purposes.

negative hallucination:

A kind of hallucination producible in somnambulism where the subject can be given suggestions that he or she cannot see something that is really there.

neodissociation theory:

Ernest Hilgard's dual-mind theory that parallel streams of thought run concurrently separated by amnesiac barriers whereby only one stream is consciously accessible at a time, the other(s) being temporarily inhibited but still present capable of effecting behavior subconsciously.

Neoplatonism:

The latest iteration of Platonic philosophy developed by Plotinus in the third century CE that ultimately found expression in Theurgy during the end of Late Antiquity.

non-linear trance model:

A new model for trance states that no longer relies on the traditional up/down metaphor made obsolete with the discovery of exotic trance states that do not conform to it.

OBE (out-of-body experience):

A phenomenon where it seems one's soul or spirit separates from the body, free to travel on its own independently, and then return back.

Occam’s razor:

The principle that no more assumptions than necessary should be needed to explain something. It is the idea that the simplest explanation is usually (but not always) the best explanation.

outsider hypnosis:

Hypnosis practiced by individuals or groups who acquired their hypnotic techniques independently (self-learned) from the usual formal training offered by established institutional sources.

Panhellenic Games:

The collective term for four separate festivals held in ancient Greece. They included the Olympic Games (athletics) and the Pythian Games (which included music contests).

parts therapy:

The hypnotic technique of intentionally splitting a hypnotized subject's personality into many selves with differing opinions on the matter at hand, so as to reach an agreement that resolves the issue upon reintegration back to the subject's normal primary self. The technique temporarily creates multiple personalities for therapeutic purposes, as opposed to people suffering from Multiple Personality Disorder who often involuntarily take on different personalities—the best analog for the ancient concept of demonic possession.

Pholarchos:

"Lord of the Lair," name adopted by the presocratic philosopher, Parmenides, for himself and those who followed him who presided over the subterranean incubations performed at the subterranean cryptoporticus in Velia.

photic stimulation:

The ability of flashing or strobing lights to entrain and alter consciousness at different frequencies of flashing. Some frequencies can negatively affect epileptics and trigger involuntary convulsions.

Poimandres (sometimes Pymander or Pimander):

The primary god-like dragon character of the visionary Hermetic text *The Poimandres*. Poimandres grants Hermes Trismegistus gnosis and reveals to him the secrets of the universe.

positive hallucination:

Seeing something that is not really there. (Compare with *negative hallucination.)*

possession:

The phenomenon wherein someone's personality is supposedly taken over and supplanted by an outside demon or spirit. A possessing spirit or demon could only be removed by exorcism.

post-hypnotic suggestion:

A hypnotic suggestion given to someone by a hypnotist while in trance that can then be activated later using a trigger given to them while in hypnosis such that they act out and perform the predetermined behavior after emerging from trance. Sometimes post-hypnotic suggestions can be triggered long after they were installed when the subject was hypnotized to do so. They can be effectively used to send people instantly in and out of trance states with just a word from the hypnotist (suitable for magical spectacles wherein a magician produces the illusion of "striking someone dead" with one trigger word and then "resurrecting" that person back to life again using another trigger word whispered to the pseudo-dead person).

psychogenic illness:

Illness caused by someone's mind, and not due to physical causes. Psychological stressors cause brain changes that produce physical symptoms. Possible symptoms include pain, tremors, paralysis, fainting, paralysis, and seizures. Since psychogenic illnesses aren't physically caused, there's not much a regular physician can do to help. Treatment is possible by use of hypnosis—the methods employed at the temples of Asclepius apparently being extremely successful at curing people suffering from such maladies.

psychosomatic illness:

An illness either caused or worsened by psychological factors. Instances lacking any known physical cause are called *psychogenic illnesses.*

Pyramid Texts:

The wall relief texts found in early Egyptian dynastic tombs (c. 2613-2181 BCE), particularly that of the pharaoh King Unas (c. 2465–c. 2325 BCE). They contain sacred utterances to assist the king on his way to the afterlife. Found with the funerary texts are also utterances that could only

apply to a living king undergoing initiatory rituals involving deep trance to simulate and practice death and dying. Utterances found in the Pyramid Texts persisted to be found later in the Coffin Texts (c. 2134-2040 BCE) and then even later in the so-called Book of the Dead (c. 1550–1069 BCE), popular near the end of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Pythian Games:

Panhellenic musical competitions similar to the athletic Olympic games. They were celebrated and held every four years at Delphi in honor of the god Apollo.

recursive loop (hypnosis):

A technique of hypnotic language using an endlessly repeating and reinforcing loop. For example: "The deeper you go, the better you feel, and the better you feel, the deeper you find yourself going into hypnosis."

regression (hypnosis—A.P.A. definition):

A therapeutic technique in which an individual under hypnosis is induced to relive a previous experience that may be contributing to current emotional difficulties. Not related to past-life regression, which is pure pseudoscience.

relaxation response:

Using relaxation suggestions and techniques to induce hypnosis. At one time it was thought to be the only method able to do so, which has since been proven wrong due to the subsequent discoveries of exotic trance states, the inductions for which do not require relaxation.

rhetoric:

The art of verbal persuasion. In the Greco-Roman world, rhetoric training was considered essential to a proper education.

Sed Festival:

An ancient Egyptian jubilee celebrated every 30 years or more. It required the king to perform certain acts verifying to the populace his continued ability to effectively rule the country. Scenes and references to

the Sed festival of King Unas are found in the Pyramid Texts that adorn the walls of his tomb as well as content concerned with the afterlife, some of which indicate rituals involving trance on the part of the king.

sensory bombardment:

Situation when the senses are overloaded with such intense repetitive stimulation that a person "escapes" into trance for refuge.

sensory deprivation:

Process by which a person is deprived of normal external stimuli such as sight and sound for an extended period of time, causing him or her to experience various types of mental phenomena, some of which are conducive to mystical initiations.

shabti:

Small figures found in ancient Egyptian tombs that were meant to come alive and serve the deceased in the afterlife. They were often made of blue faience, a type of glazed pottery. One can speculate that they might have originally been associated somehow with "machine elves" sometimes encountered on DMT (As of writing this, traces of DMT from a plant called Syrian Rue have recently been identified in samples taken from ancient Egyptian pottery ware).

shaman:

A specialist in inducing and using trance to contact the spirit world for the benefit of the tribe or community.

shamanism:

A system of religious practice that primarily relies on trance to communicate with the spirit world.

shock hypnosis:

People suffering from severe physical trauma *are already in a highly focused trance state* called "shock hypnosis." Shock hypnosis makes things much easier for a hypnotist first responder, since there is no need for a formal hypnotic induction—victims are already in a profound state of

trance, so they are already ready to receive positive suggestions given to them to help with an emergency situation.

shock induction:

A hypnotic induction in which surprise and shock can cause a subject to "escape into trance" and become hypnotized.

Sichort state:

See *Ultra Depth.*

sleep temple:

A temple where sick people could come and spend the night for healing by a god or goddess. A sleep temple dedicated to the god Asclepius was called an *asclepeion.*

somnambulism:

The trance state used for most modern hypnosis. It is considered the most desirable and useful type of trance because of the many phenomena that can be produced there. In somnambulistic trance, critical thinking is mostly turned off or bypassed. Therefore, subjects mostly just accept and implement suggestions by the hypnotist. (Also called *artificial somnambulism*.)

somnambulist:

1. Someone in the trance state of somnambulism.
2. A trance virtuoso.

Sophists:

The oratorical philosophers of Plato's time (5th to 4th centuries BCE). Sophists were usually itinerant teachers who specialized in teaching rhetoric. They were often skeptics and moral relativists of the type deplored by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, the most famous being Gorgias.

Spiritualism:

A belief in communication with the spirits of the dead, especially through mediums. As a religious movement, Spiritualism became very popular at the turn of the 20th century.

stage hypnosis:

One of the two main types of modern Western hypnosis, the other being *therapeutic* or *clinical hypnosis (hypnotherapy).*

subconscious mind:

(Sometimes now called "the unconscious mind"). Collective name for those parts of your mind whose thoughts and reasoning you cannot consciously access. Your subconscious mind controls much of your behavior and emotions, and runs your body. The subconscious mind performs all behaviors we do automatically for us without thinking. While the conscious mind is limited to focusing on performing one thing at a time, the subconscious can multi-task. The subconscious mind hypnotists refer to is not the same as the "subconscious" of Freud and psychiatry.

suggestion (hypnosis):

Statements by a hypnotist telling the hypnotized subjects what to do, say, or think next. They are called suggestions rather than commands because a hypnotized person can generally refuse to comply if what they are told conflicts with their sense of well-being or personal morals.

The Poimandres:

A visionary Hermetic text featuring a dragon named Poimandres. A strong candidate for being an initiatory hypnotic induction script for initiation purposes.

therapeutic/clinical hypnosis:

Another name for *hypnotherapy.*

theriomorphs:

Animal/human hybrids (like our modern werewolf, for example). Many theriomorph statuettes have been discovered at stone age sites, possibly indicating shamanistic practices simulating the transformation into totemic or prey animals

Theurgy:

The Neoplatonic movement of Late Antiquity concerned with uniting with and becoming God. Their exact methods for doing so remain unknown, but the hypnotic technique of Deep Trance Identification (DTI) would supply an apt modern analog for possibly achieving that.

Thoth ("Djehuty" in Egyptian):

Major ancient Egyptian god of writing, knowledge, learning, magic, and so forth. Possibly the origin of Hermes Trismegistus, a popular religious figure of late antiquity.

trance:

A mental state other than sleep or the normal waking state. There is a wide spectrum of trance states, including those induced by drugs, entrainment, and hypnosis.

trance logic:

The manner in which hypnotized subjects respond without critically examining what they are being asked to do. Involves disabling of contrastive reasoning and sorting for difference that would otherwise cause someone to reject what they are being told by the hypnotist while in trance.

trance virtuoso:

Someone trained or self-trained to go into trance or hypnosis on command, usually in response to a *trigger* previously installed using *post-hypnotic suggestion.* Sometimes called a *somnambulist*.

trigger (hypnosis):

A word, phrase, or other sign given by a hypnotist to someone in hypnosis such that when he or she hears or sees it while in a normal awake

state it automatically triggers the subject to subconsciously carry out the hypnotically pre-determined behaviors.

Ultra Depth® (aka Sichort State):

A deep level of trance—arguably the deepest currently known. To achieve Ultra Depth, the subject is "staged" over a series of sessions, each time given a post-hypnotic trigger word to go deeper into trance than the time. Eventually they are launched into a deep, self-referential trance state. Subjects may stay in the trance state almost indefinitely until they return to the normal waking state on their own. They retain no memory of the experience. Supposedly, advanced healing and certain metaphysical phenomena are uniquely available to those in this trance. Also called the *Sichort state* after its discoverer, Walter Sichort.

Ultra Height®:

A trance state developed by hypnotist Jerry Kein. In the induction, the subject is told to take the body deeper as the mind rises. Claims of metaphysical experiences for the state make it a prime candidate for some ancient analog of it being used for religious and initiatory purposes. Subjects in Ultra Height are able to communicate in a more lucid manner than someone in regular hypnosis, which facilitates its use uses for therapeutic purposes.

unconscious mind:

Bad term adopted to replace the term "subconscious mind." This, because it is so easily confused with its more familiar usage found in medical terminology meaning "not conscious," which the subconscious *surely is not.*

unitive experiences:

States of consciousness characterized by a sense of unity and oneness with the rest of reality transcending sensory or cognitive apprehension.

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Zeus 299, 337, 365

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[1] For example, there is a story of Jesus healing a woman who secretly touched the hem of his garment. After he has identified her as the person who touched his clothing, she confesses that she had done so knowing that if she could just touch the clothes he was wearing she would be healed. The proof of his honesty lies in what he then says to her—instead of telling her "Daughter, I, son of God, have healed you" or "Daughter, God In his Infinite mercy and power has healed you," he in fact tells her the truth as any honest hypnotist would do: “Woman, your faith has healed you…”

[2] Anonymous (2013). Hypnotism and Religion: The production of miracles by mental suggestion. trans. Steve Smith. Noon Sun Publishing.

[3] Or, as the ancient Romans liked to say, “Arguing over the shadow of an ass...”

[4] Given the lack of scientific development, it may have made more sense in ancient times than it does now to attribute causation to outside supernatural forces. But knowing what we know now, to credit invisible non-human entities for the production of hypnotic phenomena is like skipping all the rational explanations for why your phone might be missing—that it was misplaced, someone unknowingly borrowed it, or maybe somebody even stole it—and jumping straight to the conclusion that underwear gnomes from another dimension must have been responsible.

[5] Fanhao Nie, Daniel V. A. Olson "Demonic Influence: The Negative Mental Health Effects of Belief in Demons," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, January 27, 2017

[6] See below, in the section "The Traditional Hypnotist Model of the Mind" in chapter 4, for my explanation as to why I prefer the term “subconscious mind” over the modern term “unconscious mind."

[7] Like when you're on a diet and, out of the blue, your body simply walks you over to the refrigerator and inexplicably starts stuffing your face with food—all while you're just watching yourself do it, becoming little more than a horrified spectator along for the ride…

[8] It is more useful to assume that mental phenomena such as these are by their nature internally rather than externally generated, since any mental phenomenon attributed to intelligences beyond ourselves automatically puts things not only beyond our reach, but beyond our control (and certainly beyond our means to study them). Furthermore, assigning causation to something outside of us has us voluntarily relinquishing our personal responsibility for the phenomenon’s generation, and for our ongoing part in the process. Exteriorization denies our individual responsibility, and ultimately disempowers our perceived ability to generate change.

[9] "Psychophysiological Correlates of Unconsciousness and Near-Death Experiences," James E. Whinnery, Ph.D., M.D., Journal of Near-Death Studies Summer 1997

[10] https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/02/26-percent-of-americans-say-the-sun-revolves-around-the-earth/453834/

[11] https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2021/10/21/americans-say-ghosts-exist-seen-a-ghost

[12] I prefer to say "emerged from trance" rather than "awakened from trance," simply because a person in hypnosis is technically never really asleep at all (trance and hypnosis being completely different mental states from sleep, although they may sometimes seem similar). The exception is when stage hypnotists tell hypnotized subjects to "sleep" and "awaken from trance," though this is merely for the sake of expediency (since everyone knows what those words mean and will respond accordingly onstage).

[13] Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main. "Brain treats real and imaginary objects in the same way." ScienceDaily, March 6, 2015.

[14] "The existence of a Hypnotic State Revealed by Eye Movements." PLoS ONE, 2011; 6 (10): e2364

[15] E.R. Hilgard, "Toward a Neodissociation Theory: Multiple Cognitive Controls in Human Functioning," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 12 (1974), 302-16.

[16] Front. Psychol., 17 July 2020, Sec. Consciousness Research https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01746)

[17] https://www.popsci.com/science/article/2012-10/not-everyone-can- be-hypnotized/

[18] Roszak, Theodore (1972). *Where the Wasteland Ends.* London. p.473

[19] Lynn, Christopher. *Evolutionary Psychology.* 2014 Nov 11;12(5):983-1003.

[20] Taylor & Francis. "Why do we tap our feet to a musical beat?" ScienceDaily, July 8, 2016.

[21] "Newborn infants detect the beat in music", PNAS, Gabor P. Haden, Olivia Ladnig, Istvan Sziller, and Henkjan Honing 2009

[22] Johanna Sanger, et al, "Intra- and interbrain synchronization and network properties when playing guitar in duets," Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 29, November 2012.

[23] Björn Vickhoff, et al,."Music determines heart rate variability of singers," Frontiers in Neuroscience, 2013

[24] Pavel Goldstein, Irit Weissman-Fogel, Guillaume Dumas, Simone G. Shamay-Tsoory. "Brain-to-brain coupling during handholding is associated with pain reduction," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* , 2018.

[25] Siever, D, "The Rediscovery of Audio-Visual Entrainment Technology," unpublished manuscript available from Mind Alive Inc., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (2000)

[26] Yeates, L.B., "James Braid (V): Chemical and Hypnotic Anesthesia, Psycho-Physiology, and Braid's Final Theories", Australian Journal of Clinical Hypnotherapy and Hypnosis, Vol.40, No.2, (Spring 2018), pp. 112–167.

[27] Years ago, I had the pleasure to have James Ramey come to my home to give a private three-day seminar for two hypnotist friends and myself. One of my friends had some stubborn physical problems that needed to be healed, so I used his training to kill two birds with one stone. He was a very likeable guy and agreed to come, even though I stipulated that he should do his training with us

only if he could do so without any metaphysical references (as I knew he had a penchant for that kind of stuff). He was able to do so (for the most part); and my dear friend (Joy Livingwell, who happens to be one of editors for this book) was greatly helped by his Ultra Depth technique.

[28] Multiple personality disorder (MPD) is also called *dissociative identity disorder* (DID) and *split personality.*

[29] To this day, I cite this fact in my arguments against those who still support the practice of mesmerism (yeah, there's still some around even now), asserting that for them to maintain such ridiculous beliefs is patently unpatriotic and un-American in light of the enduring scientific legacy established by one of our country's greatest patriots, Benjamin Franklin!

[30] Forrest, Derrek (2001). *Hypnotism—A History.* Penguin Books.p.143

[31] In a way, this was a third-party version of the "blind therapy" mentioned earlier in chapter 8 in connection with psychogenic illnesses. Blind therapy assumes that one's subconscious mind knows what and where the illness is, how it started, what's maintaining it, and (most importantly) how to end it; whereas the mesmerists claimed that the subconscious minds of their trance virtuosos could do the same in somnambulism, *but for other people.*

[32] A 2015 Australian study analyzing over 1,800 papers on homeopathy, with its theory that super-diluted substances had curative properties and its principle of "like cures like," concluded that it was "completely ineffective." (Blakemore, Erin "1,800 Studies Later, Scientists Conclude Homeopathy Doesn't Work," Smithsonian Magazine, March 11, 2015).

[33] Phrenology was eventually debunked in the mid-1800s by a French physician named Marie Jean Pierre Flourens; but an analog of it was briefly revived under the Nazis who collected and measured skulls from all around the world to support their racial theories of Aryan superiority.

[34] Acupuncture is still practiced as an "alternative" medical treatment today. However, research has since proven that it is indeed a pseudoscience, finding that random punctures to the skin have the same effect as those placed at designated energetic "meridians." (Elsevier Health Sciences. "Acupuncture for pain no better than placebo—and not without harm, study finds." ScienceDaily, March 25, 2011.)

[35] Hypnotic anesthesia is still used today for some surgeries and in dentistry, particularly for patients who, for some reason or another, are unable to tolerate chemical anesthesia (morbidly obese patients, for example, who might stop breathing if chemical anesthesia were applied).

[36] For lots of good info on the backlash against hypnotism and its failure as an institution, see Mark Rosenfeld's *A Critical History of Hypnotism: The Unauthorized Story* .

[37] The "Elman Induction" that uses subsequent eye closures, among other techniques, to quickly take a subject into somnambulism replaced previous procedures that usually took 4 or 5 weekly visits for the subject to gradually, over time, go deep enough to finally attain that state.

[38] I had the privilege of meeting Ormond and watching him perform some demonstrations just before he passed away. He was the last of the truly great old-timey stage hypnotists. Beloved by many, his impish stature and irrepressible charisma made him seem more like a wizened Yoda, than the seasoned and enduring entertainment phenomenon he really was.

[39] This is typical for the popular works of mystic and scholar Peter Kingsley: though one of his major topics of discussion is how trance was used for mystical experiences in ancient Greece, one cannot find the word "trance" anywhere in his writings.

[40] Becker, Judith (2004). *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion and Trancing.* Indiana University Press.

[41] L.A. Times "Giving Until It Hurts"

http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jan/29/world/fg-hypnosis29

[42] During my time studying ancient Egyptian at UCLA, one of the interesting things we did in class was to follow a particular utterance found in the Pyramid Texts through its appearance much later in the Coffin Texts, and all the way to its final inclusion in the Book of the Dead. A most interesting feature of one particular utterance our professor chose for us to look at, was that at some point it had become so corrupted that the scribe trying to copy it had to modify it just for it to make sense, which ended up changing its meaning entirely (a common hazard back then when copy machines had not yet been invented).

[43] The major exception possibly being Antiphon, who we will be talking about a little later on in this book.

[44] Dickie, Matthew W. (2001) Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World. Routledge. p.32

[45] Philostratus. "Lives of the sophists," Book I, 15.2

[46] Plutarch. "Moralia." 833C-d (italics mine)

[47] One of the courses Jerry taught was in emergency hypnosis. During one of the hypnosis courses I attended long ago, the instructor told us a story about him; it went something like this: Just to test his own hypnotic prowess, Jerry would sometimes ride along in an ambulance with the first responders. One time they came upon the scene of a terrible auto accident that had just happened- the car was on fire, ready to explode any minute as the flames got closer and closer to the car's gas tank. But the driver was stuck in the car, his leg snared and hopelessly entangled in the crumpled metal that was once his car door. As they were unable to remove his leg from the wreck in order to save him (they had no "jaws of life" back then), Jerry got out of the ambulance, quickly hypnotized the guy, and proceeded to chat with him about his wife and family while the rescuers amputated his leg without any anesthesia—the driver feeling no pain the whole time. After the impromptu amputation was finished, the driver was finally extracted from the wreckage, ultimately saving his life. Although this would not have been impossible for someone like Jerry Kein (since he actually taught a course in "emergency hypnosis"). I personally don't know whether the story is really true or not. Either way, what a great story!

[48] https://www.unk.com/blog/how-to-use-hypnosis-in-emergencies/

[49] Caitlin Shure, "Voice Hearing by the Numbers," Scientific American, September 1, 2013

[50] http://news.stanford.edu/news/2014/july/voices-culture-luhrmann-071614.html

[51] Ross Pomeroy, "Why Do Schizophrenics Hear Voices?" Realclearscience.com blog, August 30, 2012

[52] Simon, Bennett, MD. (1980). *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of*

Modern Psychiatry. Cornell University Press. p.63.

[53] Ritner, Robert Kriech (1997). *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice.* Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. p. 40, note 181

[54] "Mummy's Life" from Archaeology Magazine [March/April 2009] p.38.

[55] It is common for public yoga sessions to end with a period of "guided meditation" conducted by the instructor before adjourning class. As one can tell from the characteristic bloodshot eyes of people who emerge from trance after the "guided meditation" ends, it's really a kind of brief hypnosis session; but don't try to convince the yoga instructor that he or she was just performing hypnosis on them…it was guided meditation!

[56] Merkur, Dan "Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth." Esoterica 1, 1999: p.82, Meyer, M. W. (ed.)

[57] The "Mithras" Liturgy—Pamphlet, Edited and Translated by Marvin W. Meyer (Graeco-Roman Religious Series) Scholar's Press—January 1, 1976

[58] Meyer, Marvin W. (1999) *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts.* University of Pennsylvania Press.

[59] As far back as the ancient Egyptians, ancient priests were aware of the precession of the equinoxes (also called "axial precession") during a cycle that took around 25,772 years to complete (the "Great Year"); during this cycle, the pole star would shift from one star to another. This was due to the rotation of the earth in a manner similar to that of a spinning top, where the axis of the angle of rotation at the highest point of the top shifts in a circle of its own (which you can see happen by simply spinning a top). Thus, the pole star at the time of the construction of the Great Pyramid was in the constellation Draco the dragon, and *not* our present pole star of Polaris. This esoteric knowledge does a lot to explain many myths—such as the "fall of the dragon" as portrayed indirectly in Genesis. Thuban, the star in the constellation Draco closest to the pole at that time, only *seemed* to be the "top-dog" polar god until the pole star shifted. For many of the civilizations that worshipped the pole star as the highest god (the "unmoved mover"), this shift to another star served to expose the dragon's rule as being just a temporary sham, and caused him to mythically fall out of favor to make way for the new pole star. This also explains the universal symbolism of a snake wrapped around a tree or pole, symbolizing the world axis. Apparently the Mithraic cult identified seven stars in this sequential rotational cycle, which they characterized as "bull-faced gods." [For an explanation of the relations between precession and esoteric mythology, see the excellent book *Hamlet's Mill* by Georgio Santillana and Hertha von Dechen.]

[60] Dr. Justin Sledge, Esoterica YouTube video: "The Mithras Liturgy—Mystical Ascent in the Mystery Cult of Mithras," 9:24 (2022)

[61] It is interesting that dogs have only recently been discovered to have the ability "sniff out" certain human diseases (Mia Rozenbaum, "The science of sniffs: disease smelling dogs," Understanding Animal Research, June 19, 2020). But just the fact that they often instinctively lick the wounds of their masters may have made this association a natural one long ago. It turns out that dog saliva contains chemicals called histatins that can help ward off infection. But on the other hand, dog saliva can also contain bacteria that can cause infections—so it's a toss-up. (Sandra C. Mitchell, DVM, DABVP, "Why Does My Dog Lick My Wounds?" PetMD, Oct.22, 2021).

[62] Askitopoulou, Helen & Konsolaki, Eleni & Ramoutsaki, Ioanna & Anastassaki, Maria. (2002). "Surgical cures under sleep induction in the Asclepieion of Epidauros." International Congress Series. 1242. 11-17. 10.1016/S0531-5131(02)00717-3.

[63] Edelstein, Emma and Ludwig (1945). *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies.* John Hopkins University Press. p.204.

[64] I once asked a German hypnotist how they do conversational hypnosis, since oftentimes in German you don't really know what's going on in a sentence until you reach the very end where you finally get to the verb. He said that they somehow manage. But Greek and Latin would be another matter entirely, as word endings generally serve the same grammatical functions as word order does in English.

[65] Edelstein, Emma and Ludwig (1945). *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies.* John Hopkins University Press. p.142.

[66] Edelstein, Emma and Ludwig (1945). *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies.* John Hopkins University Press. p.160.

[67] Ibid, p.159.

[68] Ibid, p.161.

[69] Ibid, p.163.

[70]. CBS News poll: How often do you remember your dreams? BY FRED BACKUS DECEMBER 3, 2021 / 6:04 PM / CBS NEWS

[71]. Elman, Dave (1977). *Hypnotherapy*. Westwood Publishing Company. Pp. 274-296.

[72] Edelstein, Emma and Ludwig (1945). *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies.* John Hopkins University Press. p.151.

[73] Ibid, p.149.

[74] I myself have taught hypnotists how to hypnotize from the direction of sleep first (HypnoSleep), since you don't even need to do an induction. You just rouse someone sleeping only enough to have them come "up" into somnambulism. It's easy for the beginner to do, because they can start out with only a few suggestions and begin doing cool stuff right away...*even before they learn any inductions or how to take someone into somnambulism from the waking state.*

[75] Meier, C.A. (2009). *Healing Dream and Ritual.* Daimon. Verlag. p.53.

[76] ibid, p.53.

[77] "A Healing Touch for Empire: Vespasian's Wonders in Domitianic Rome," Greece & Rome, Volume 57, Issue 1, April 2010, pp. 77 - 106

[78] Eventually, this would become a routine (if one-way) journey for many a Roman emperor: upon their deaths, they were proclaimed by the Roman state to have become gods who had ascended to heaven to join their fellow deities (*apotheosis* in Greek). “Woe is me! I think I'm becoming a god!” were the last words uttered by the emperor Vespasian according to his biographer Suetonius, just before he passed away in 79 CE *due to natural causes* (believe it or not!).

[79] One such cave was at Cape Matapan, at the southernmost point of mainland Greece; in antiquity it was believed to be the portal to Hades that was used by both Hercules and Orpheus in their descent to the underworld.

[80] Yulia Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind.* p. 6. Much of the information presented in this chapter is from her two excellent books, which I highly recommend: *Divine Mania: Alteration in Consciousness in Ancient Greece* (2018); and *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth* (2009).

[81] Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth.* Oxford University Press. p.185.

[82] Some scholars of mysticism, like the late Dan Merkur, draw a distinction between trance and “ecstatic reverie,” which describes the internal visualizations experienced during sensory deprivation. Merkur calls these visualizations “an alternative psychic state;” and says: “Just as ego functions may become active during sleep, resulting in lucid dreaming, ego functions may return to vigilance once a waking reverie has gotten under way. The contents of ecstatic reveries are not entirely consistent with the contents of trances.”—Merkur (1993), p.34.

[83] Merkur, Dan (1993). *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions.* State University of New York Press. p. 31.

[84] Merkur, Dan (1993). *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions.* State University of New York Press. p. 34.

[85] Sanders, R. S., Jr., & Reyher, J. (1969). Sensory deprivation and the enhancement of hypnotic susceptibility. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 74*(3), 375–381.

[86] Ibid

[87] Parmenides lived in the town of Elea, hence the philosophers associated with him and that area are known as "Eleatic."

[88]. Ustinova, Yulia (2009). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth.* Oxford University Press. p.194.

[89] Kingsley, Peter (1999). *In the Dark Places of Wisdom.* The Golden Sufi Center. p.5.

[90] The two books he's published on this subject are *In the Dark Places of Wisdom* (1999) and *Reality* (2003).

[91] Sound familiar? As mentioned earlier, "neither sleep nor waking" is one of the most common "red flags" indicating that what is really being referred to is ultimately some kind of hypnosis or trance in which contact could be made with "another level of awareness and another level of being." (In the Dark Places of Wisdom, pp.78–80).

[92] Plato, *Laws,* 713, C-D

[93]. The reader is referred back to chapter 5 for details as to how this technique may have been used by the theurgists to achieve their ends in this regard.

[94] Dickie, Matthew W. (2002). *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World.* Routeledge. p.306.

[95] *Luck, Georg (1985). Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds. The Johns Hopkins University Press.* p.92 note 136

[96] Take the nascent field of "archaeoacoustics," wherein the acoustics of ancient buildings, caves, megaliths, and other forms of architecture at archaeological sites are measured to gauge the psychological effects sound may have had on the people there who made them. After taking the data

gathered at the sites it is then analyzed applying the principles of psychoacoustics (a branch of psyhophysics that studies the psychological responses to sound). It's a nice idea for an interdisciplinary approach. But really, *how many of the researchers doing this stuff know anything at all about trance induction or hypnosis,* the true and fundamental intentions behind the subjects of their research? How many are also hypnotists who routinely deal with these and similar matters every day? I'm guessing *none of them.*

[97] There is a wonderful movie called "The Legend of 1900" (1998) by acclaimed director Giuseppe Tornatore, about a piano prodigy (a fictional character) who lived his entire life on a cruise ship. *Although he never stepped off the boat,* his notoriety for piano playing reached the ears of Jelly Roll Morton, "the Father of Jazz" (a real historical figure) who comes aboard with his retinue and challenges him to a piano duel. First, Jelly Roll Morton—an awesome pianist in his own right—plays and wows the crowd with his skills. But what is relevant to our discussion here is what happens next: after the ship-bound prodigy has taken his turn, the camera pans to the audience watching—and their reaction is priceless. They are literally frozen in trance, mouths gaping in astonishment, a lit cigar falling from the lips of one of them. The reaction to his performance lets the movie viewer know for sure that he had won the duel, and that for Jelly Roll it was all over and he had lost the contest—an excellent portrayal of musical trance and the hypnotic power of music!

[98] Margie Meacham "Your Brain is Wired for Music," March 14, 2019

[99] Anthony Brandt, Molly Gebrian, L. Robert Slevc. "Music and Early Language Acquisition." Frontiers in Psychology, 2012

[100] University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylän yliopisto. "Music evokes powerful positive emotions through personal memories." ScienceDaily, December 11, 2018.

[101] Ancient Greek Musical Contests at the Pythian Games, Delphi, Natasha Sheldon, History and Archaeology Online, August 15, 2021.

[102] Morela Hernandez, "The Impossibility of Focusing on Two Things at Once," MIT Sloan Management Review (April 9, 2018)